



JADAVPUR
JOURNAL OF
COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE

34

1996-97

DEPARTMENT OF
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
CALCUTTA

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

34

Patrick Michael Thomas	The Troubadour, The Shaman and The Palace Lady : The Crosscurrents of Desire	5
Sisirkumar Das	Constructions of 'Indian Literature'	35
Himani Bannerji	Representation of Class in Present Day Indian Theatre : Arun Mukherjee's 'Theatre of Political Correctness'	51
Vivian S. Brown	Manipulation of Poetic Language : Fragmentation of the Visible in Du Bellay's <i>Les Antiquitez De More</i>	75
Debalina Sen & Sucharita Chakraborty	Changing Patterns in Comparative Literature Pedagogy in India	89

1996-97

Editor

Swapan Majumdar

**DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
CALCUTTA**

Founded by
Buddhadeva Bose

Editor
1961-63 : Buddhadeva Bose
1964-82 : Naresh Guha
1983-95 : Amiya Dev

Editorial Board
Manabendra Bandhyopadhyay Shibaji Bandyopadhyay
Nishita Chakraborty Dasgupta Swapan Majumdar

Price : Rs. 50.00 / \$ 7.00

Published By Bhaskar Banerjee, Registrar, Jadavpur University,
Calcutta 700 032 and printed by Laser Impressions,
2 Ganendra Mitra Lane, Calcutta 700 004

ISSN 0448-1143

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

34

Professor Sisir Kumar Das and Professor Himani Banerji are well-known and respected names among Comparative Literature scholars. We welcome into the JJCL community our new contributors Dr. Patrick Michael Thomas and Dr. Vivian S. Brown ; it gives us great pleasure to publish their work for the first time. Sucharita Chakravorty and Debalina Nath (Sen) are Senior Research Fellows in our department.

Swapan Majumdar

THE TROUBADOUR, THE SHAMAN, AND THE PALACE LADY : THE CROSSCURRENTS OF DESIRE

Patrick Michael Thomas

A cursory comparison of medieval East Asian and troubadour poetry will not unnaturally result in a statement like the following :

Nowhere does the speaker say that his love for a paragon of virtue is ennobling or that suffering caused by unfulfilled love purifies and enriches his life...Likewise despite such similarities as the convention of hiding the identity of the beloved, the threat of gossip and slander, an exchange of poems describing the parting of love at break of day, the cult of beauty and refinement, nothing in love of Heian Japan¹ (or elsewhere in East Asia) corresponds to the courtly love tradition in the West. We will look in vain for such dominant virtues of Western courtly love as courtliness, *jovens*, *mesura*, in Japan (Lee 99-100).

Continuing, Peter Lee insists :

Although Peter Dronke has convincingly shown that *amour courtois*...is "no new feeling," but one of the eternal aspects of man,...there is no counterpart in East Asia... (Lee 100).

We suggest that such a categorical statement is inappropriate, if not quite inaccurate. If we cut through the outer periphery of *amour courtois*, as Mr. Lee has neglected to do, we will discover at the very core of courtly love a consciously cultivated unfulfilled desire. As Bernart de Ventadorn puts it so well :

Car aitan rich'amor envei,
pro n'ai de sola l'enveya!²
("Ara no vei luzir solelh," vv. 39-40)

Since I desire such a rich love, the desire itself is a reward
(Nichols 61).

This concept of love as desire, a concept that has proven dangerous to the reality of love as it is actually lived, is at the foundation of the troubadour concept of pure or true love (Frank 13). Nor is it a question

of raw desire. The distinction made between *fol'amor* and *fin'amors* was the difference between crude wayward lust and a more controlled refined passion. This incandescent longing, we submit, is a more apposite basis of comparison between the love poetry of oriental and occidental literatures.

From that point of view one is immediately struck by certain similarities between *The Nine Songs (Chiu ko)*³ attributed to Ch 'ü Yüan⁴ (fourth century B. C.)⁵ and the *cansos* of Bernart de Ventadorn, the epitome of courtly love⁶ (twelfth century A.D.) In these early Chinese poems a shaman⁷ seeks but fails to make contact with a goddess. His relationship with the Spirit is represented as a type of love affair⁸ (Walcy 13). Some have proposed that the sexual element was the primary factor or impetus in the development of shamanism (Sternberg, Pt. 2, 480), although others may dispute that hypothesis (Ripinsky-Naxon 77). What is common to both the shamanistic unsuccessful quest⁹ of the goddess¹⁰ and the Bernardian *verso* is the ecstatic longing. In "The Lady of the Clouds," for example, the shaman says:

With longing, thinking of our queen, we sigh;

With anguish deep our hearts yearn grievously. (Yang 17)

In "The Goddess of the Xiang River":

I wait for her, yet long she doth delay;

Thinking of her my plaintive flute I play.

• • • • •

Like ceaseless stream my tears continuous flow;

Though longing for my queen I hide my woe. (Yang 18)

In "The Great Fate":

My love awaiting, cassia twigs I weave,

With endless longing mournfully I grieve. (Yang 22-23)

In "The Young Fate":

For my belov'd I wait and long in vain; (Yang 24)

With Bernart de Ventadorn, the yearning is no less intense:

Be l'agra per fol qui'm disses

tro aras qu'en sui tan prion

que ja m'engués tan deziron

moins qu'en mourir en piques;

("Anc no gardeci sazo ni mes," vv. 7-11)

Until now that I am so deeply involved, I would have considered anyone a fool who told me that love might keep me so full of longing that I could die (Nichols 55).

É mainh genh se volv e's vira
mos talans, e ven e vai,
lai on mos volers s'atrai.
Lo cors no'n' pauza ni fina,

... ..

no sai com me contenha! ("E mainh gen.... vv. 1-4, 7)

In many forms my desire turns and twists, comes and goes, toward where my will is drawn. My heart does not pause or rest... I do not know how to contain myself (Nichols 90).

Ai las! com mor de dezire!

("Lonc tems a qu'eu no chantei mai," v. 49)

Alas, how I die of desire (Nichols 119).

A mo talen volh mal, tan la dezire,

("Per melhs cobrir lo mal pes e'l cossire," v. 25)

I am annoyed with my desire, so much do I want her

(Nichols 144).

Part of this ecstatic yearning is a reaching upwards to that which is superior, which contradicts Lee's statement about lack of ennoblement. In *The Nine Songs* the shaman seeks union with the deity which would remove him from mundane reality :

In this moment of union the shaman roams, perceives, and feels like a divine one. The escape from mortality seems all too possible: We have here the beginning of a long association between eroticism and the quest for immortality (Li 5).

In "The Great Fate," for example, the shaman speaks with the voice of a god courting a goddess, the Lady of the Clouds :

I soar aloft and circle without care,
In light and darkness, through the liquid air.
With you, oh, Lady of the Clouds. I speed
Through the Nine Continents the way to lead.

... ..

I pluck the giant flaxes' snowy head,
An off'ring to the lady who has fled. (Yang 22)

The troubadour's stance is more humble :

E s'a leis platz que'm retenha,
far pot de me so talen,
melhs no fa'l vens de la rama
qu'enaissi vau leis seguen
com la folha sec lo ven.

("Amors, equera'us preyara," vv. 29-33)

And if it please her to keep me on, she can have her way with
me, more than the wind does with the branch,... (Nichols 50).

Nonetheless, his love for *midons* draws him upwards to a higher
plane :

De tal amor sui fis amans
don duc ni comte non envei,
e non es reis ni amirans
el mon, que, s'el n'avi'aitau,
no s'en fezes rics com eu fau;

("Ges de chantar no'm pren talans," vv. 17-20)

I have such a love that I do not envy duke or count; and there
is no king or emir in the world, who, if he had such a one, could
enrich himself as I have (Nichols 99).

More explicitly Bernart states:

Nuls om ses amor re no vau,
del mon tota'lh senhoria,
si ja joi no'n sabi' aver.

("Ges de chantar no'm pren talans," vv. 29-32)

No man is worth anything without love, and therefore I would
not want to rule the whole world if I could not have joy
(Nichols 99).

The shaman literally seeks a goddess, whereas the troubadour treats
his Lady as if she were a deity. Despite the difference, the poetic
description is not dissimilar :

Within the deathless hall she stays alone;
Her glorious brightness rivals sun and moon

("The Lady of the Clouds," Yang 17)

car sa beutatz alugora
bel jorn o clarzis noih negra;

("Amors, equera'us preyara," vv. 36-37)

for her beauty brightens the beautiful day and illuminates the dark
night (Nichols 50).

Musical accompaniment is still another feature Ancient Chinese and Occitanian poetry share in common.

...in East Asia most poetry at one time or another was chanted or sung, often accompanied by music. The "airs" in the *Book of Songs* were folk songs and was supposed to be sung; so were the shamanistic ritual pieces, "Nine Songs," in the *Ch'u Tz'u* anthology, early anonymous ballads (*yüeh fu*), and early lyrics (*tz'u*) (Lee 1).

Burton Watson gives further clarification on the *Chiu ko*:

The songs were apparently designed to accompany the actions of a ritual of evocation, perhaps a religious dance or pantomime. Such pantomimes may, as Hawkes has suggested, have been adapted and presented at the Ch'u court as masques for the entertainment of the nobility (Watson 242).

Troubadour poetry, perhaps accompanied by a type of mime (Kendrick 169ff), was indeed sung as illustrated by the musical manuscripts that have come down to us. In the case of Bernart de Ventadorn, it is indeed unfortunate that only a tenth of his melodies has survived the ravages of time (Pons 76-77). As Frederick Goldin has indicated, a courtly audience seems to be suggested as apparently is the case with the shamanistic songs.

The troubadour technique of composing for an audience required the singer to strike many different attitudes in the course of the song. He had to step out of one rôle and into another constantly, and smoothly, in a sequence that would be full of surprises and yet coherent: it all had to make sense... With Bernart, the troubadour technique of playing on the perspectives of an audience reaches a level that was never to be surpassed. (Goldin 6, 108)

Finally, let us point out that just as Bernart, like other troubadours, used religious language as a cover for his attempts at seduction, so also Chü Yüan used the shamanistic quest of the goddess for a less than religious purpose.¹² On the literal level *Li sao*¹³ involves the quest of a beautiful woman, *mei-jen*, but on a deeper level it is a complex political allegory in which Chü Yüan seeks a reconciliation with the Prince of Ch'u who had sent him into exile (Wang 70-71). In *Li sao* and Bernart's poems it is interesting that a bird is used as a messenger

of love, although in different ways. For Bernart the song of the nightingale¹⁴ is an invitation to love. He reacts to it, sometimes negatively:

Bel m'es can vei la brolha
reverdir per mei lo brolh
e'lh ram son cubert de folha
e'l rossinhols sotz lo folh
chanta d'amor, don me dolh;

(“Bel m'es can...,” vv. 1-5)

It pleases me when I see the trees become green again throughout the woods, the branches covered with leaves, and, under the foliage, the nightingale singing of love, the cause of my suffering (Nichols 66).

More actively, Chü Yüan uses a bird to make an entreatment of “love” on his behalf. However, instead of choosing the *chiu*, a turtldove, whose frivolity he mistrusts, the poet sends a *chen*, a snake-falcon, the ineptness of which results in failure (Wang 75). Thus, it seems justified to conclude that there are significant parallels between the troubadour’s quest of the apotheosized lady and the shamanistic quest of the goddess as expressed in *The Nine Songs*.

Even though the *Chiu ko* promises enchanted world, the mood is already elegiac (Li 4):

Come without word, she leaves without farewell,
Her pennons clouds, she rides the whirlwind fell.
For life to part, no grief more pain can move;
No joy excels the rapture of first love.

(“The Young Fate,” Yang 24)

The sense of unfulfillment had not yet become disenchantment (Li 6). In *Yü-tai*¹⁵ *hsin-yung* (*New Songs from a Jade Terrace*¹⁶), the mood is definitely darker. Here nostalgia reigns supreme (Birrell, *Songs*, 14). The “Palace Style Poetry” of early medieval China, like troubadour poetry, had certain conventions: 1. the person or subject is female, 2. she is usually a palace lady or noblewoman, 3. her lover is absent, either through war or waning passion, 4. the scenario is usually the lady’s bedroom, 5. the mood is usually sad, melancholy, pessimistic (Birrell, “Decorum,” 112). On the face of it, there would seem to be great differences between the palace lady and the troubadour. Although

there are *trobairitz*,¹⁷ the vast majority of the troubadours are male. Nonetheless, before his Lady, whom he calls *midons*,¹⁸ the poet takes on a passive, more feminine role. There is clearly a reversal of the traditional roles of man and woman (Hall 3). He pleads, he begs, he awaits her pleasure. The troubadour pledges servitude.

Domna, vostre sui eserai,
del vosre servizi garnitz.
Vostr'om sui juratz de plevitz,
e vostre m'era des abans.

("Pel doutz chan que'l rossinhols fai," vv. 29-32)

Lady, I am yours and will be, ready for your service. I am your man, sworn and pledged, and yours I was before (Nichols 140).

With subtle audacity, Bernart insinuates :

Mal o fara, si no'm manda
venir lai on se despolha,
qu'eu sia pex sa comanda
pres del leih, josta l'esponda,
e'lh traya'ls sotlars be chaussans,
a genolhs et umilians,
si'lh platz que sos pes¹⁹ me tenda.

("Lancan vei per mei la landa," vv. 29-35)

She will do ill if she does not bid me come to her boudoir, where, at her command, I may be near the bed, or at the edge of it, so that, humbly kneeling, I may remove her well-fitted shoes, if she pleases to offer me her foot (Nichols 116).

As to "Palace Style Poetry," Anne Birrell underlines an important facet of these poems :

The poet, usually male, takes on the literary persona of a woman in love, expressing in descriptive and lyrical terms her deep emotions. This literary pose had a long tradition before the Southern Dynasties era and derived mainly from the ballad, folk-song, and the ancient style poem²⁰ (Birrell, *Songs*, 8).

In either case, whether it be the Chinese poet explicitly taking on a feminine persona or the troubadour implicitly projecting himself into a subordinate female role, it is a question of a literary androgyny partially reminiscent of shamanism :

The dissolution of contraries - life and death, light and dark, male and female - and reconstitution of the fractured forms is one of the most consistent impulses in the initiation and transformation process as experienced by the shaman... The occasional androgyny of the shaman is one reflection of paradise, where the two become one (Halifax 27).

However, the reason that Bernart and the palace lady are unhappy is precisely because they are separated from the one they love. In most of Bernart's *versos*, the poem is lambent with precoital desire. "Palace Style Poetry" deals with postcoital longing. This explains why in Bernart's poetry the season of spring prevails, whereas in the Jade anthology autumn appears to be predominant. It is not insignificant that in Lazar's edition of Bernart de Ventadorn, 20 of the 49 *cansos* open with the season of spring and only two with autumn. The *Natureingang* of the following *verso* is typical :

Lancan folhon bosc e jarric,
e'lh flors pareis e'lh verdura
pels vergers e pels pratz,
e'lh auzel, c'an estat enic,
son gai desotz los folhatz,
autressi'm chant e m'esbaudei
e re florisc e reverdei
e folh segon ma natura.

("Lancan folhon....," vv. 1-8)

When woods and thickets shoot forth their leaves, and the flowers and greenery appear throughout the gardens and meadows, and the birds, who have been sulking, are gay beneath the foliage, then I too sing, rejoice and blossom. I am renewed and put forth leaves according to my nature (Nichols 108).

Atypical is the beginning of this autumnal poem :

Lancan vei la folha
jos dels arbres chazer,
cui que pes ni dolha,
a me deu bo saber.
No crezatz qu'eu volha
flor ni folha vezer,
car me s'orgolha

so qu'eu plus volh aver.

("Lancan vei la folha," vv. 1-8)

It should please *me* to see the leaves fall from the trees, whomever else it may pain or grieve. Do not believe that *I* am interested in seeing flowers or leaves : the one I want most to have is haughty to me (Nichols 112).

And yet, what is atypical for Bernart is much more typical in the "palace style" correlatives :

Ever since you went before

My tense face near the porch won't soften,

... ..

In front of the garden purple orchids²¹ bloom.

Nature withers, sensing the change of season,...

(Pao Ling-hui, "Poem sent to a traveller,"²² 123)

I wait for you, you never come.

Autumn geese fly double, double.

(Wang Yüan-chang, "The hour of return," 125)

Who can long endure separation?

Autumn ends, winter is here once again :

(Hsieh T'iao, "Autumn nights," 129).

Anne Birrell correctly states that spring and autumn predominate in love poetry in general because

...these are the seasons when nature is in the process of fundamental change and most clearly manifests its movements (Birrell, *Songs*, 15).

Spring and autumn are the seasons of romance. Sometimes we find an antithetical mixture of these periods of transition : an external spring contrasting with an internal autumn of the heart.

Most spring hearts are aroused,

But I look on nature and feel sad.

Ever since you went away,

Orchid hall stopped humming with the loom.

(Liu Yün, "Parting is wrong", 145-46)

How will I lessen the tears of spring

That could break a lover's heart?

(Shen Yüeh, "Peach", 139).

With Bernart we also find an internalized autumn :

Can lo dous temps comensa
e pareis la verdura
e'l mons s'esclair' e gensa
e tot cant es, melhura,
chascuna creatura
s'alegra per natura.
Eu sols fatz estenensa
de far envezadura.

("Can lo dous temps comensa," vv. 1-8)

When the sweet season begins and greenery appears, when the world is lit up and beautified, and all that exists feels better, each creature rejoices according to his nature. I alone abstain to giving witness to some joy.²³

For the most part, though, the troubadour's poetry express an internalized spring, which operates independently of nature.

Tant ai mo cor ple de joya,
tot me desnatura.
Flor blancha, vermelh' e groya
... ...
me par la frejura,
Tan ai al cor d'amor,
de joi et de doussor,
per que'l gels me sembla flor
e la neus verdura.

("Tant ai mo cor de Joya," vv. 1-4, 9-12)

My heart is so full of joy that everything seems changed to me: the frost seems like white, red, and yellow flowers... My heart is so full of love, of joy, and of sweetness that ice seems like flowers to me, and snow like greenery (Nichols 171).

Si tot no'm vei flor ni floha,
mells me vaic'al tems florit,
car l'amors qu'en plus volh, me vol

("Lonc tems a qu'en no chantei mai," vv. 7-9)

Although no flowers or leaves are to be seen, I am even better off than in summer-time, for the love I most desire, desires me (Nichols 119).

Nor is the contrast of seasons the only antithesis found in the work of Bernart or the Jade anthology. Consider, for example, these few lines in which the connotations of light and heat are opposed by those of darkness and cold:

My inch of heart feels stifled, numb.
Especially on nights when fireflies flit
Or leaves from trees scatter in jumbled heaps.

(Wang Yüan-chang, "Numb," 126.)

The lively fireflies and the rustling dead leaves are poles apart. In another poem the separation of the lovers is also represented in terms of hot and cold.

In Ching and Yang spring is early and mild,
Yu and Chi still have frost and hail.
Your northern cold I already know,
My southern heart you will never see.
(Pao Ling-Lui, "An Old Theme addressed to a modern person," 123)

As Mancini has so well illustrated, Bernart is a master of antithesis (Mancini 63). In this *canço* we observe the antithesis between life and death:

Ben es mortz qui d'amor no sen
al cor cal que dousa sabor;

...
Ja Domnedeus no'm azir tan
qu'eu ja pois viva jom ni mes
pois que d'enoï serai mēspres
ni d'amor non aurai talan.

("Non es meravelha s'eu chan," vv. 9-10, 13-16)

He is surely dead who does not feel the sweet taste of love in his heart... May God never hate me so much that I may live a day or a month longer, once I become a nuisance to others and lose all desire of love (Nichols 134).

Love is life, life without love is death. The troubadour even goes so far as to say:

Qu'eu no pose viure ses amar,
que d'amor sui engenoitz.

("Can la boschatges es floritz," vv. 15-16)

I cannot live without love, for I was engendered by love (Nichols 158).

It is paradoxical, therefore, that Bernart will not hesitate to declare he is dying of love.

E s'om ja per ben amar mor,
eu en morrai, qu'ins mo cor
li port amor tan fin' e natural
que tuih son faus vas me li plus leyal.

(“Can par la flors josta'l vert folh,” vv. 13-16)

And if a man ever dies of great love, I will die of it, since within
my heart I carry a love so true and real that, compared with me
the most sincere are all false (Nichols 161).

The palace lady is also dying of love. Her lover absent, she does not
cease to yearn for him. Her love is obsessive and lasting.

Deep love arouses distant longing
Coils of obsession bring dreams of my love.

(Wang Su, “Love's favour,” 119)

A traveller came from far away,
He brought me a lacquer singing lute.
Its strings were set in the key of farewell.
All my life I will keep this chord.
The year grown cold will not change my heart.

(Pao Ling-hui, “In the key of farewell,” 122)

When first I went up to phoenix court
This mirror reflected moth eyebrows.
Here it reflects eternal resignation,
But won't reflect eternal love for you.
(Kao Shuang, “The mirror,” 149)
Though wind and frost may come and go
I'll live alone, faithful still to you.

(Wang Seng-ju, “Spring regrets,” 166)

Frequently, the obsession of love is expressed in the Bernardian *canço*
by a restless mode of existence :

Noih e jom pes, cossir e velh,
planh e sospir; e pois m'apai.

On melhs m'estai et eu peihz trai.
Mas us hos respeihs m'esvelha,
don mos cossirers s'apaya.

("Ara no vei luzir solelh," vv. 33-37)

Night and day I think, worry and stay awake, weep and sigh;
and then I am appeased. The better off I am, the worse I
feel. But one good hope which eases my worry awakens me (Nichols
61).

car sui tengutz per l'in amic
lai on es ma voluntatz;
que re mais sotz cel no'n envei
ni ves altra part no sopici
ni d'autra no sui en cura.

("Lancan folhon bosc e jarric," vv. 12-16)

For where my desire is I am considered a true lover, since I
do not desire anything more beneath the sky, and I do not
plead elsewhere or keep any other woman in mind (Nichols
108).

Be sai la noih, can me despolh,
e leih qu'eu no dormirai re.
Lo dormir pert, car eu lo'in tolh
per vos, donna, don me sove;

("Can par la flör josta'l vert folh," vv. 17-20)

I know full well that when I undress at night, I will not sleep at
all in bed. I lose sleep because I deprive myself of it for your sake,
lady, whom I call to mind (Nichols 162).

Around this *point fixe*, this unchanging love, whirls the everchanging
mutability of the world:

How happy to fall in love,
So sad a lifetime parting.
Let us cling to our hundred year span.
Let us pursue every moment of time,
Like grass on a lovely hill
Knowing it must soon wither and die.

(Wu Man-yüan, "Two white geese," 120)

In secret I fear cold winds coming
To blow on my jade steps tree
And, before your sweet love has ended,
Make it shed midway.

(Chiang Yen, "Lady Pan's 'Poem on a Fan'," 134)

Sometimes the deep love of the palace lady is contrasted with the
fickle passion of the male :

Time moves on, a man is quick to forget old love;
Seasons change, he tirelessly courts new love.

(Ch'iu Chü-yüan, "The seven-jewel fan," 124)

Glamorous beauty who does not desire?
A man's love will not last forever.

(K'ung Weng-kuei, c'Lady Pan," 177)

The first strophe of this *canço* of Bernart states the antithesis concisely :

Lo tems vai e ven e vire
per jorns, per mes e per ans,
et eu, las! no'n sai que dire,
c'ades us mos talans.
Ades es us e no's muda,
c'una'n volh e'n ai volguda
don anc non aic jauzimen.

("Lo tems vai e ven e vire," vv. 1-7)

Time comes and goes returning through days, through months, and
through years, and I, alas, know not what to say, for my longing
is ever one. It is ever one and does not change, for I want and
have wanted one woman, from whom I have never had joy (Nichols
131).

Unlike the absent male lover in "Palace Style Poetry," the troubadour's Lady
is physically there, but her refusal to reciprocate the poet's tenderness
means that emotionally she is not there, so near and yet so far.

Eu n'ai la bon' esperansa.
Mas petit m'aonda,
c'atressi'm ten en balansa
com la naus en l'onda.
Del mal pes que'm descansa
no sai on m'esconda.

("Tant ai mo cor ple de joya," vv. 37-42)

I have great hope from her. But it does me little good, because
she keeps me poised like a ship on a wave. I do not know how to
escape from the sorrowful thought that afflicts me (Nichols 171).

At times the despairing desire of the lover turns into a flash of
hatred, indifference being the true opposite of love.

I have you on moonlit autumn nights
For leaving my quiet room to darkness.

(Hsieh T'iao, "The candle," 129)

Just because of this parting I musn't
Be foolish and hate you!

(Ho Tzu-lang, "Bronze steps," 150)

I know in my heart I hate you...
A lute string snaps, it can be mended.
Once love departs it is detained no more!

(Wong Seng-ju, "For a singer who feels hurt," 170)

Being mistreated by his Lady, Bernart denounces all women.²⁴

De las domnas me dezesper;
ja mais en lor no'm fiarai;
c'aissi com las solh chaptener,
enaissi las deschaptendrai.
Pois vei c'una pro no m'en te
vas leis que'm destrui e'm cofon,
totas las dopt'e las mescre,
car be sai c'atretals se son.

("Can vei la lauzeta mover," vv 25-32)

I despair of women. No more will I trust them; and just as I used
to defend them, now I shall denounce them. Since I see that none
aids me against her who destroys and confounds me. I fear and
distrust all of them, for I know very well that they are all alike
(Nichols 168).

Aissi'm part de leis e'm recre;
mort m'a, e per mort li respon,

("Can vei la lauzeta mover," vv. 53-54)

I leave her and renounce her. She has slain²⁵ me and with death
I shall answer her (Nichols 168).

Instead of being the faithful lover, he will become the fickle lover of many, like the absent male lover of the Jade anthology.

A tal domna m'a rendutz
c'anc no'm amet de coratge,
e sui m'en tart aperceubutz
que trop ai faih lonc badatge.
Oi mais segrai son uzatge:
de cui que'm volha, serai drutz,
e trametrai per tot salutz
e aurai mais cor voltage.

("Estat ai com om esperdutz," vv. 9-16)

I gave myself to a woman who never loved me in her heart,
and I realize too late how much time I have lost. I shall no longer
follow her ways. I shall be the lover of anyone who wants me;
I shall send greetings to everyone, and I shall have a fickle heart
(Nichols 92-93).

It should be noted that nowhere does the troubadour say he hates *midons*. In spite of occasional moments of rebellion, he still remains her vassal:

c'amors m'asalh, que'm sobresenhoreya
e'm fai amar cal que'lh plass' e voler.
E s'eu am so que no'm deu eschazer,
forsa d'amor m'i fai far vassalatge.

("Can vei la flor, l'erba vert e la folha," vv. 11-14)

since love assails me and lords it over me, making me love
and desire whomever he pleases. If I love one who should
not be mine, love's power makes me act like a vassal²⁶ (Nichols
164-65)

Recalling the *cri de coeur* of Catullus, "odi et amo," we can say of the palace lady that she hates her lover precisely because she loves him and wants him there where she can hold him. Since he is absent, however, the objects of her boudoir can be animated with a male personality. This erotic personification might be considered the most original feature of Southern Dynasties love poetry in the context of its tradition (Birrell, *Songs*, 20). Here, Anne Birrell sees a parallel with the troubadours:

The voice of the personified lover finds its closest echo in the plaintive voice of the troubadour of medieval Europe who confesses hopeless love to an indifferent lady. Both are voices of a vassal enthralled by a feudal sovereign, offering homage with no hope of requital. In the Chinese case the peculiarity is that the objects owned by a woman defer to her as their mistress, addressing her as a groveling slave fawns on the mistress of the house who mistreats him (Birrell, *Songs*, 21).

Before his Lady, Bernart is humility itself.

Tan sui vas la bela doptans,
per qu'e'm ren a leis merceyans,
si'lh platz, que'm don o que'm venda!

(“Lancan vei per mei la landa,” vv. 26-28)

...I am so fearful of her. Therefore, I surrender myself, a suppliant, to her. If it pleases her, let her give me away or sell me (Nichols 116).

Although both the troubadour and the palace lady complain bitterly several times about their mistreatment at the hands of their lover, nonetheless we do not see where the personified lover is mistreated in the Chinese poems. On the contrary, what we discover is the palace lady hugging and caressing these eroticized objects.

He also left me his loving you pillow.
His inscription I always press to my heart,
His pillow makes me dream we sleep together.
(Pao Ling-hui, “His pillow makes me dream,” 124)

She hugs her lute near Shrub Terrace,
Lingers to cherish fair beauty.
Stands still for the setting of the sun,
(Shen Yüeh, “For nothing,” 142)

I gave you my song, you refused.
Cradling my lute I mourn the cold.
(Ho Ssu-ch'eng, “Old Love,” 179)

In addition to individual eroticized objects, we sometimes find a “string of images to form a cluster bound together by a single unifying theme”

(Birrell. *sings*, 19). On occasion, a series of images can create a romantic mood as in "The Curtain":

Lucky to be sewn with pearls,
 Wispy, wispy round your pillars.
 No need to roll me up in moonlight,
 Light am I when breezes blow.
 Always gathering gold censer breath,
 Ever catching jade lute whispers,
 All I ask is lay out casks of wine,
 Let light orchid oil jars face the glow of night!

(Wang Yüan-chang, "The Curtain," 126)

The pearls like miniature moons, moonlight itself, gold incense breath, jade lute whispers, casks of wine, light orchid oil: everything, individually and collectively, creates an atmosphere of expectation and desire. It would seem the closest parallel in Bernart's poetry is the description of burgeoning nature at the beginning of his *canso*.

Can la verz folha s'espan
 e par flors blanch' el ramel,
 per lo douz chan del auzel
 se vai mos cors alegran.
 Lancan ve'ls arbres florir
 et au'l rossinhol chantar,
 adonc deu's ben alegrar
 qui bon'amor sap chاوزir.

("Can la verz folha s'espan," vv. 1-8)

When the green leaf unfolds, and the white flower blossoms forth on the branch, my heart goes rejoicing with the sweet song of the bird. When one sees the trees flower, and hears the nightingale sing, then he who knew how to choose a good love ought to rejoice (Nichols 152).

The fresh greenery, the new leaves on the trees, the white flowers: everything betokens Spring. The birds and the nightingale open their throats in song. In like manner, the troubadour's heart blossoms in song and in love. The implicit consequences of that passion are nonetheless never expressed in explicit erotic terms. This is true for troubadour poetry²⁷ as well as for the Jade anthology. In the latter, punning was used to suggest sexuality.

An anonymous poem of the fifth century A.D., "Song of spring," couples the erotic images lotus leaves (suggesting a supine woman) and of hibiscus (*fu-yung*, *fu* being a pun for lover), with the puns lotus root (*ou*), also meaning mates, and lotus (*lien*), also meaning passionate embrace (Birrell, "Decorum," 117-118).

Another erotic signal is mention of the lady's belt : when the belt is unfastened, the woman's gown falls open (Birrell, *Songs*, 112).

Light songs disturb silk belts,

Gurgling laughter loosens silk gowns.

(Hsieh T'iao, "As the spring scene fades," 127)

More subtle, perhaps, but also profoundly more erotic is the reference to the fulling pounder :

A pining woman hangs her night pounder.

(Chiang Hung, "Winds crush a tree," 277)

There are two puns here : (1) *ssu* means pining and also silk and (2) "pounder" signifies the tool for softening silk fibres and also a lover. Hence the fulling of the silk cloth by a pining woman can also indicate lovemaking in which the lady gets an erotic pounding from her lover. From this point of view the pounder, the form of which is long and hard, is ithyphallic and the softened silk is yonic. This hypothesis becomes a little clearer in such lines as :

Autumn nights when urgent looms hum,

South neighbor's fulling hurries,

I think of you nine heavens distant,

(Hsieh T'iao, "Autumn nights," 128)

Urgent thoughts of love are associated with the hurried act of fulling. On the other hand, there is the negative image.

Ever since you went away

My tense face near the porch won't soften,

Pounder and block no longer sound at night,

(Pao Ling-hui, "Poem sent to a traveller," 123)

In this case, no fulling connotes lack of intimacy. Is it possible that references to the loom may not also be a subtle suggestion of lovemaking, for in act of weaving a longish block of wood, called the shuttle, carries the filling strand through the warp. As with the pounder, the penetration of the shuttle through the warp could be

interpreted ithyphalically. Examples from the Jade anthology would seem to bear this out. In "Autumn Nights" we have already seen how "urgent looms" are associated with "hurried fulling." As with the pounder, there is also the negative mode:

The love lamp dims, bright no more,
The cold loom at dawn still weaves.

(Shen Yüeh, "Night after night," 139)

Ever since you went away,
Orchid hall stopped humming with the loom.

(Liu Yün, "Parting is wrong," 145-146)

I leave my loom, the slanting moon sped west,
Pound my block, the glowing sun hurries east.

... ..

I avoid carved gilt dragon candles.

(Wang Seng-ju, "Fulling cloth," 167)

The cold loom may still weave, but it is somehow like a fire that has become a pile of ashes, yet still retaining a few burning embers. The abandoned loom seems a fitting companion for an abandoned lover. The reference to the dragon candles requires some explanation. From the Chinese perspective a dragon could potentially be a fertility image (Birrell, *Songs*, 18). Avoidance of the dragon candles is therefore concomitant with the cold, abandoned loom. As in "Palace Style Poetry," so also in troubadour poetry, discretion in erotic matters is de rigueur. Of course, you have to look carefully beneath the surface of Bernart de Ventadorn's highly polished verse to ascertain his delicate erotic. For example, in "Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn," we discover the possibility of a pun.

Aissi co'l peis qui s'eslaiss' el cadorn
e no'n sap mot, tro que s'es pres en l'ama,
m'eslaisesi eu vas trop amar un jorn,
c'anc no'm gardei, tro fui en mei la flama,
que m'art plus fort, no'm feira focs de forn;

("Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn," vv. 8-12)

Like a fish who rushes to the bait and suspects nothing until
he has caught himself on the hook, I let myself go one day and

did not care until I was in the midst of the flame which burns me
more fiercely than fire in an oven (Nichols 73).

On the surface level, the troubadour compares himself to an unwary fish which, attracted by bait, gets caught on a hook, only to be cooked in a flame. However, if one examines the original more carefully, it may very well be that *peis* signifies, not only "fish," but also "penis." The development from Latin appears to be: *penis* > *pein* > *pei*. Although it is true that in Provence, Latin *e* does not evolve into *ei* as in the North of France, nonetheless the poetic device consisting in the replacement of closed *E* by the diphthong *ei* in rhyme position affects closed *E* generally regardless of its etymological sources. The dropping of the final *n* of *pein* > *pei* is normal in limousin, Bernart's dialect. As to the objection that Bernart uses *peis* and not *pei*, we respond that there are clear indications in the MSS of the late 12th century that the final *-s* dropped in a praeconsonantal position. Thus, this *peis* seems to be a phallic symbol, hooked on a *cadorn* or "little cord," which might be interpreted as that part of the lady's *cors* which is homologous with the phallus (Thomas, "Aissi," 3-5). A close examination of v. 49 of "Lo tems vai e ven e vire" also yields results of an erotic undertone: *sol d'eus adenan s'emen*.

("Lo tems vai e ven e vire," v. 49)

if only she improves by herself from now on (Nichols 131).

Once the edited apostrophe is removed, i.e., *s'emen* > *semen*, which is the way it appears in the manuscript, the erotic possibilities become more evident. In that case, in addition to the metaphor of ripening grain, one might posit other interpretations such as pregnancy or sexual intercourse. In any case, something is growing bigger. Agriculturally and erotically, it is a question of grain or flesh growing longer and harder. From that viewpoint, this verse could be interpreted as signifying that, although he has lost the peak of his tumescence ("que pois l'arma n'es issida" [v. 45], "just as after the kernel is gone" [Nichols 131], his half-erect phallus throbs within its prepuce or "sheath" ("balaya lonc tems lo gras" [v. 46], "the straw flutters a long time" [Nichols 132], until such time as his lady permits him to release his seed ("sol d'eus adenan semen") (Thomas, Artless," 291). Still another case of subtly suggested phallicism is found in certain verses of "Lonc temps a qu'ieu non chantei mais":

mais con li fos bons servire.

E s'icu n'ai pen' c martire.²⁸

As before, if we remove the editorial apostrophe from "pen'e martire," returning to the phrase as it appears in the manuscript. i.e., "pene martire," then the ambiguity becomes more apparent. In addition to the surface meaning of "pain and martyrdom," there is also the suggestion of a phallic martyrdom (Kendrick 101). Nor is troubadour poetry limited to puns on male genitalia. As Laura Kendrick perspicaciously points out,

Conort means “welcome”: but, if divided and explained in a facetiously etymologizing way, it could mean “cunt place” (*con-ort*). Alongside the serious study of troubadour lyrics ran a facetious interpretative tradition (Kendrick 101).

In the poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn, we sometimes find "Conort" used as a proper name.

Conortz, era sai eu be
que ges de me no pensatz,

• • • • •

Bels Conortz, can me sove
com gen fui per vos onratz

• • • • •

E digas li que be'm vai,
car de Mo Conort aten
enquem bon'aventura.

(“Conortz, era sai eu be.” vv. 1-2, 9-10, 51-54)

Conort,²⁹ now I know for sure you are not thinking of me at all,

Bel Conort, when I remember how fairly I was honored by you

...

And tell him that I am well.

for I still expect good fortune from my Conort (Nichols 84-85).

At other times, the troubadour uses "conort" as a common noun.

No i a conort qui fort no'm pes,

car o ilh es, cosseih no'n pres.

("Bernart de Ventadorn, del chan," vv. 23-24)

There is absolutely no comfort for me, only pain, for where she is concerned, I have no counsel (Nichols 79).

If the critical reader looks carefully beneath the obvious denotations, he will uncover in both the troubadour *canso* and "Palace Style Poetry" punning connotations of a most discreet and sophisticated eroticism.

Cognizant of the differences between the erotic tradition of the troubadours, on one hand, and those of the shaman and the palace lady, on the other, we nonetheless feel it is appropriate at this point to gainsay the contention of our colleague, Peter Lee, that there is no counterpart to *amour courtois* in the literature of East Asia.³⁰ In our study on the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva, we demonstrated that there were several parallels between this literary masterpiece of South Asia and the poetic corpus of Bernart de Ventadorn.³¹ In like manner, we have attempted to show that, despite the differences, the parallels between the Provencal poetry of the troubadour and the Chinese *Chiu ko* and *Yü-t'ai hsin-yung* are not insignificant. The intense, but unsuccessful, quest of the goddess by the shaman seems to mirror the troubadour quest of the "belle cruelle" who is treated like a goddess. Both the shaman and the troubadour are reaching upwards to a higher plane of existence. It would seem that the *Nine Songs* and the *canso* were accompanied by music in a courtly setting. Although their aims are different, Bernart and Chü Yüan employ religious language for a secular purpose, i.e., seduction and political reconciliation respectively. An obsessive love is a common thread that runs thorough the poetic fabric of all three works investigated. Indeed, Bernart and the palace lady insist upon the unchangeability of their love while the world around them is ever mutable. This semi-isolation from the external world explains how at times there can be the opposition of exterior spring versus an interior autumn of the soul, prevalent in *Yü-t'ai hsi-yung*, or the reverse, an external autumn versus an internal spring of the heart, much more common in the *versos* of Bernart de Ventadorn. Spring is as appropriate for the troubadour's precoital ardor as autumn is befitting for the palace lady's postcoital longing. There are other antithetical relationships, not the least of which is the literary androgyny whereby the Chinese male poet take on the female persona of the palace lady and the troubadour takes on the

subordinate role more common to a female. Thwarted passion will sometimes erupt into flashes of hatred and renunciation. For the most part, though, both the troubadour and the palace lady are emotionally dependent on their distant lover. The Jade poets will occasionally put together a network of images to create a certain mood like that of romance. Analogously, the *Natureingang* of the Bernardian *canço* creates the atmosphere of spring, which is an invitation to love. In neither erotic tradition is sexuality ever explicit. It has been shown, however, that verbal puns are employed by Bernart and the Jade poets to suggest lovemaking, be they the phallic pounder or "peis" or be they the yonic silk or "conort." Is it not time for medieval scholars to broaden their concept of what courtly literature is so that the various courtly literatures around the world can be better appreciated.

NOTES

1. The period of time alluded to covers the 8th to the 12th centuries A.D.
2. The citations of Bernart de Ventadorn's poetry are from Moshé Lazar's edition.
3. This group of poems is possibly the earliest stratum of the *Ch'u-tz'u* corpus (Li 4), which is the name of a Chinese literary tradition, already sufficiently antiquated to be in need of revival by the second half of the first century B. C. (Hawkes 72). Composed of more than one genre, this poetic grouping or "Matière de Ch'ü"/"Matière de Ch'ü Yüan" represent the cannibalization by a new secular literary tradition of an earlier, oral one (Birch 43-44).
4. It has been proposed that this group of songs may originally have been sacrificial hymns used by shamans in temple ceremonies. In his travels Ch'ü Yüan may have found them, improved them with the stamp of his genius, thereby transforming the crude originals into artistic form in which beauty of sentiment is matched by beauty of words (Liu 26).
5. This is called the Warring States period of ancient China.

6. Moshé Lazar puts it succinctly: "Parmi les troubadours et les trouvères du XII^e siècle, Bernart de Ventadour occupe une place toute particulière à la fois par la profondeur de son inspiration, la sincérité de ses confessions, la variété de ses émotions, le rythme et la musicalité de ses vers et par l'originalité de son imagerie poétique" (Lazar 9).

7. An intermediary between the world of the Spirits and man. In ancient China a female shaman was called *wu*, a male shaman *hsi*. In actual practice, though all shamans were called *wu* irrespective of their sex (Waley 18).

8. In ancient times sacrifices to the gods were occasions for courtship, whether it be the love of men and women, gods and goddesses, or of gods and mortals. Thus the mention of love in these poems is perfectly natural (Yang 14-15). It is also perhaps not insignificant that, while Bernart is a poet of southern France, Chü Yüan wrote in a language and style characteristic of the romantic songs of Ch'u and express a kind of sentiment and thought typical of the southern poets (Liu 25-26).

9. To be more precise, it was the female deities of rivers and mountains that persistently eluded the shaman (Hawkes 80).

10. As we have already noted, there were both *hsi* and *wu*. This somewhat complicates a translation of *The Nine Songs* because of the absence of inflections and the frequent omission of the sentence subject in early Chinese usage. Thus, the Mountain Spirit is either a male deity, the object of love of a female shaman, or vice-versa (Liu 27, Li 5).

11. In spite of such parallels, one is not blinded to the fact that, whereas the intent of the shamanistic odes is religious, the essence of *fin'amors* is gilded concupiscence.

12. This use of a traditional form, with a non-traditional intent, represents a discontinuity with the past and, for its time, may be considered "modern" (Nichols, "Medievalism," 11).

13. There are various interpretations of this title: Encountering sorrow, Sorrow after departure, Sorrow in estrangement, or even the name of a certain type of music (Yang 1). In his book of translations, Yang Xianyi calls it "The Lament."

14. This is not to neglect his famous lark poem, "Can vei la lauzeta mover." The nightingale, however, is mentioned more frequently in Bernart's poetry.

15. As with *Li sao*, *Yü-t'ai* has more than one interpretation : a platform for the performance of dance, music, and song; the haunt of a seductive mountain goddess; a mirrorstand (Birrell, *Songs*, 18). May we suggest that music, seduction, and beauty seem to be allied concepts.

16. This anthology of poetry was compiled in the middle of the sixth century by Hsü Ling (507-583 A.D.) at the request of Hsiao Kang (503-551 A.D.), then the crown prince of the Liang Dynasty, later to become Emperor Chien-wen. It is the first anthology in Chinese poetic tradition that is devoted exclusively to poems of love. Another innovative aspect is that the majority of the poets lived during the Southern Dynasties era of the fifth and sixth centuries (Birrell, "Mirror," 33). Cf. the "southern" aspect of "The Nine Songs."

17. Azalais de Porcairagues, la Comtessa de Dia, Castelloza, Tibors, Clara d'Anduza, Maria de Ventadorn, to name some of the *trobairitz* or female troubadours. Vide A. Rieger's <*Trobairitz*>. *Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höfischen Lyrik*.

18. Although the etymology of *midons* is ordinarily traced back to *meus dominus*, William D. Paden has recently challenged that hypothesis by showing convincingly that *mihi domus* is more likely to be the word's etymon. Furthermore,

There is no doubt that in poetic practice *midons* was practically interchangeable with *ma domna*, ... The word was normally applied to the object of the poet's affection, a woman who might be august or common, worshipped or desired; in religious discourse it could be used of the Virgin or of an ordinary saint (Paden 333).

19. The fetishistic overtones here are evident. In China the erotic appeal of a woman's foot has a long history (Birrell, *Songs*, 13).

20. It is further suggested that the political defeats of the court to which they belonged caused the poets to become retrospective and pessimistic, that the contrast between the superficial glitter of the court and political impotence led the poets to create²² brittle edifice of failed love gilded with material splendour and opulence "(Birrell, "Decorum," 120). This antithesis makes one think of a somewhat similar situation in medieval Occitania :

Il termine si assesta su due polarità : da una parte (fuori della corte) il prendere, il guadagno tenuto, l'inglobamento no programmato istantaneo..., la rapina. Dall' altra (dentro la corte) la cultura del

desiderio, il guadagno sperato, e differito e rinunciato della *fin'amor*,...
(Mancini 62).

Faced with various types of political and social upheavals outside the court, the poets, both Provencal and Chinese attempt to create a haven of order within the context of a courtly existence.

21. Although *lan* is translated as "orchid," actually the flower is thoroughwort (*equatorium Chinense*), which has nothing to do with the orchid family (Waley 17).

22. All citations from the *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* are from the Anne Birrell translation.

23. The authorship of this *canço* is doubtful, which is probably why it is not found in Nichol's edition. The English translation here is from the modern French rendering of Moshé Lazar, p. 45.

24. Of course, this is only momentary. As my study on "Can vei la lauzeta mover" demonstrates, there is a vacillation between antithetical poles throughout this *canço* (Thomas, "Dynamism," 47-52). One thinks of the violent mood swings found in the poems of Li Ho (791-817 A.D.) (Frodsham lvii).

25. The English translation cannot adequately reproduce the play on words of the original: "mort" as past participle and as adjective. A more literal translation would be: "She has made me dead and with death I respond."

26. Nichol's translation says: "...like a knight." It seems to me the "like a vassal" is closer to the original.

27. Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine would seem to be an exception, but here we are considering "courtly" poetry and not those poems of jolly carnality.

28. Laura Kendrick's citation is from the K songbook (Paris, B. N. fr. 12473), fol. 17 v.

29. Moshé Lazar translates this word as "Consolation" (Lazar 117 and 119). Likewise for the next citation where Nichols uses the word "comfort."

30. There is no exact counterpart, to be sure; but to state that there is no counterpart at all, as Peter Lee contends, exceeds the limits of prudent judgement. We also take severe exception to John C. H. Wu's declaration that

...for nearly thirteen centuries after Christ, poetry in Europe with the insignificant exception of Juvenal, kept a death-like silence. It hibernated so long that when it woke up in the person of Dante, the last poetic voice it could remember was the cry of

Virgil who had laid down his harp just before Christ was born (Wu 37).

Such a statement shows a woeful ignorance of European medieval courtly literature without which *La Divina Commedia* would have been unthinkable.

31. This study, "The Mystic Erotic : Carnal Spirituality in Old Provence and Medieval India," will soon appear in *Neohelicon*.

WORKS CITED

- Birch, Cyril, ed. *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London : University of California Press, 1974.
- Birrell, Anne. "Erotic Decorum in Courtly Love Poetry in Early Medieval China." *Agenda* (England). 20 (3-4) (1982-83) : 109-121.
- tr. *New Songs from a Jade Terrace : An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry*. New York : Penguin, 1986.
- "The Dusty Mirror : Courtly Portraits of Woman in Southern Dynasties Love Poetry." Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney, eds. *Expression of Self in Chinese Literature*. New York : Columbia University, 1985. 33-69.
- Frank, Donald K. *Naturalism and the Troubadour Ethic*. New York : Peter Lang, 1988.
- Frodsham, J.D., tr. *The Poems of Li Ho*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Goldin, Frederick, tr. *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères : An Anthology and a History*. Garden City, NY : Anchor Books, 1973.
- Halifax, Joan. *Shamanic Voices. A Survey of Visionary Narratives*. New York : Dutton, 1979.
- Hall, J. *Love's Fools : Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover*. London : Tamesis Books Limited, 1972.
- Hawkes, David. "The Quest of the Goddess." *Asia maior : A British Journal of Far Eastern Studies*, New Series, XIII, 1-2 (1967) : 71-94.
- Kendrick, Laura. *The Game of Love : Troubadour Wordplay*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1988.
- Lazar, Moshé, ed. *Bernard de Ventadour. Troubadour du XII^e siècle. Chansons d'amour*. Paris : Klincksieck, 1966.
- Lee, Peter H. *Celebration of Continuity*. Cambridge and London : Harvard University Press, 1979.

- 1.1. Wal-ye. *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- 1.2. Wu-chi. *An Introduction to Chinese Literature*. Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press, 1966.
- Mancini, Mario. *Metafora Feudale: Per una storia dei trovatori*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993.
- Nichols, Stephen G. "The New Medievalism: Tradition and Discontinuity in Medieval Culture." Marie S. Brownlee, Kevin Brownlee, Stephen G. Nichols, eds. *The New Medievalism*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. 1-26.
- ., John A. Galm et al., eds. *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn*. Chapel Hill: Un. of No. Carolina University Press, 1962.
- Paden, William D. "The Etymology of *Midons*." Rupert T. Pickens, ed. *Studies in Honor of Hans-Erich Keller*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1993. 311-335.
- Pons, Alain. "Sur les Chansons de Bernard de Ventadour." *Lemouzi* 101 (janvier 1987): 74-84.
- Rieger, A. <Trobairitz>. *Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höflichen Lyrik. Edition des Gesamtkorpus*. Niemeyer: Tübingen, 1990.
- Ripinsky-Naxon, Michael. *The Nature of Shamanism. Substance and Function of A Religious Metaphor*. Albany: State University of NY Press, 1993.
- Sternberg, Leo. "Divine Election in Primitive Religion." *Compte Rendu de XXI session*. Göteborg: Congrès International des Américanistes, 1925.
- Thomas, Patrick A. "Aissi co'l peis': The Delicate Erotic of Bernart de Ventadorn." *Acta Neophilologica* XXIII (1990): 3-6.
- Thomas, Patrick Michael. "The 'Artless' Trobar Leu of Bernart de Ventadorn." *Romanische Forschungen* 104, 3-4 (1992): 275-92.
- Thomas, Patrick A. "The Hidden Dynamism in the Poetry of Bernard de Ventadorn" *Occitan/Catalan Studies* 1. 1 (1979): 47-53.
- Waley, Arthur, H. *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1973.
- Wang, C. H. "The Bird as Messenger of Love in Allegorical Poetry." William Tay, Ying hsiung Chou, Hch-hsiang Yuan, eds. *China and the West*:

Comparative Literature Studies. Hong Kong : The China University Press, 1980. 69-76.

Watson, Burton. *Chinese Lyricism : Shih Poetry of the Second to the Twelfth Century, with translations*. New York and London : Columbia University Press, 1971.

Wu, John C. H. *The Four Seasons of T'ang Poetry*. Rutland, VT; Tokyo : Tuttle, 1972.

Yang Xiangi and Gladys Yang, tr. *"Li Sao" and Other Poems of Qu Yuan*. Beijing : Foreign Language Press, 1980.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF 'INDIAN LITERATURE'

Sisir Kumar Das

The term 'Indian literature' has remained controversial as well as problematic since the beginning of its use as a category of identification of a body of literary works composed in more than one language. The first phase of the history of the term, as well as of the concept of Indian literature, belongs to the Orientalists who more or less identified it with ancient Indian literatures, or to be precise with Sanskrit literature. A. Weber's *The History of Indian Literature* (1852) was perhaps the first work to deal comprehensively with a literature which was identified as 'Indian literature'. But Weber was also the first scholar to admit the limitations of the term. His words are worth quoting not only because with them the concept of Indian literature began to be problematized but also because they are instrumental in the construction of a hegemonic view of literature.

At the very outset of these lectures I find myself in a certain degree of perplexity, being rather at a loss how best to entitle them. I cannot say that they are to treat the history of Indian literature, for then I should have to consider the whole body of Indian languages, including those of non-Aryan origins. Nor can I say that their subject is the history of Indo-Aryan literature', for then I should have to discuss the modern languages of India also, which form a third period in the development of Indo-Aryan speech. Nor, lastly, can I say that they are to present a history of 'Sanskrit literature', for the Indo-Aryan language is not in its first period 'Sanskrit' i.e. the language of the educated, but is still a popular dialect, while in the second period the people spoke not Sanskrit but Prakritic dialects, which arose simultaneously with Sanskrit out of the ancient Indo-Aryan vernacular. In order, however, to relieve you from any doubt as to what you have to expect from me here, I may at once remark that it is only literature of the first and second periods of the Indo-Aryan language with which we have to do. For the sake of brevity I retain the name 'Indian literature.'

Weber realised that the term Indian literature, if it must have a critical and empirical validity, should be identified with a literature produced in one language only. Yet, whatever the compulsions and howsoever clear he was in defining his objective, he was obliged to use the term in a sense much narrower than it be expected to would signify. Perhaps he did not realise that the term he used "for the sake of brevity" could give out wrong signals.

The complexity of the issue of Indian literature was addressed again a little more than half a century later by another European scholar: W. Winternitz. In the introduction of his three-volume *History of Indian Literature*², he declared without any ambiguity that the 'history of Indian literature in the most comprehensive sense of the word is the history of a literature which not only stretches across great periods of time and an enormous area, but is also one which is composed in many languages.' Yet, he, too, did not try to deal with the 'whole' history of Indian literature, the area of which he so courageously defined, but remained confined, more or less, within what can be broadly called Sanskrit literature. A cursory description of literary works in some of the modern Indian languages that one may find in his work makes the difference between his conception and execution extremely conspicuous.

It is important to note that two scholars separated by time and geography thought of a literature "composed in many languages" and yet they finally worked out an approach to such a multifaced Indian goddess by limiting it to the celebration of one supreme deity : Sanskrit literature. Both these works, of Weber and of Winternitz, created, or helped in creating, a perception of Indian literature based on the idea of a pan-Indian language, although they did not state that explicitly. Their works privilege Sanskrit and do not attempt to construct a framework that can integrate other languages into it. Their frameworks accommodated Pali and other Prakrit literatures only marginally, and were inadequate to tackle the multilingualism dominating throughout the medieval and modern periods. The existence of a dominant pan-Indian language provided them with a rationale and empirical support for the idea of 'Indian literature'.

The necessity of a pan-Indian language was felt more strongly than ever by the historians of Indian literatures as part of their anxiety

to legitimize the concept of Indian literature, since it was not possible to think of a literature without a location in a language. Indian literature, one may argue with some justification, does not have an empirical validity; at the most it can be identified as an aggregate of literatures written in many languages, or as a literature composed in the most dominant and the most widely distributed language, which can be accepted as a representative of Indian literary activities.¹ The first possibility, too obvious to be stressed, is puerile as a critical category; the second can hardly go beyond projecting a distorted and fragmented history. Although the Weber-Winternitz model never explicitly claimed Sanskrit as the representative of all Indian literatures, it lent support to the second approach to Indian literary history as evidenced from the works of many Western scholars who had equated Sanskrit with Indian without qualms. Edwin Arnold's *Indian Poetry* (1884), for example, included translations of two books of the *Mahabharata*, a few verses of the *Hitopadesha* and the *Gitagovinda* only. This is not only synecdochic representation of Indian literature, but also an attempt to identify — as Arnold himself states in the preface — the 'real' Indian literature by which he meant literature "free from contamination of all foreign influences" H. G. Rawlinson's description of Indian literature in *Cassell's Encyclopaedia* (1953) as "essentially philosophical and religious" is a predicable conclusion of someone who ignored not only literatures produced in various modern Indian languages but also a large part of Sanskrit literature which is neither philosophical nor religious.

The identification of Sanskrit literature as the 'real' Indian literature may be prompted not only by the Orientalist's concern for ancient India: it has a more basic and fundamental issue to deal with. The issue is the infallibility of the language-literature equation throughout the history of civilization. A literature must be defined with reference to a language: "Greek literature cannot be defined as anything else but a body of texts composed in the Greek language; Hindi literature is identified as a body of works produced in the Hindi language. This axiomatic status of literature is a stumbling block in the conceptualisation of Indian literature where the word 'Indian' stands not for a language but for a people or a geographical area. Hence the search for a language. ✓

The search for one language as the sole identifying mark of Indian literature is bound to be futile. Yet the scholars have not abandoned it altogether. Sukumar Sen, a noted historian of Bengali literature, is one of the several recent scholars to think of Indian literature within the framework of national and regional languages. In the preface to his scholarly work *Bharatiya Sahityer Itihas* (A History of Indian Literature, 1962) he states his idea of pan-Indian languages as follows :

My subject matter is the literature that is not written in any *pradesik bhasa* (regional speech) but in a language that is not the property of any particular region, a language that was prevalent in all regions (of India) and the literatures of which belonged equally to all regions — that is to say Vedic, Sanskrit, Buddhist Sanskrit, Pali, various Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Avahatta — the literatures of all these ancient and medieval Indo-Aryan languages are what I have described in this book.⁴

The shift from the Orientalists' construction of Indian literature is clear. The criterion is not the dominant language or even literary merit but the geographical distribution of a language. In this scheme of pan-Indian literature, none of the Dravidian languages, nor any one of the modern Indo-Aryan, has any place. Sen ignores another language, English, despite its wide distribution and the fact that the literature produced in it is not a "property of any particular region." Several critics and writers of our time, as diverse as P. Lal and Shashi Tharur, have indeed claimed Indian English writings as the only true Indian literature. If one takes the viewpoint of the advocates of Indian literature written only in a pan-Indian language, then the obvious conclusion will be that there was an Indian literature in the ancient period which died with the emergence of modern Indian languages; and again another Indian literature arose when the Indians found a non-Indian language, i.e. English in the nineteenth century. Thus, in this view, India had an Indian literature in the ancient period as well as in the modern period but in the medieval period India did not have Indian literature but only regional or provincial literature.

The insistence on accepting a pan-Indian language as the true vehicle of an Indian literature is derived as much from the existing linguistic hegemony in the country as from a failure to acknowledge the history of Indian multilingualism. The multiplicity of languages

in India which baffles the speakers of monolingual nation-states is not a sudden and abrupt phenomenon in Indian history. These languages have been in existence for the last several centuries, at times interacting with one another, at times functioning within a well-constructed hierarchy of communication patterns, but never in complete isolation from the others. A discourse of Indian literature is not possible without a reference to this history of multilingualism, nor is it possible to understand the forces determining the history of any single literature without recognizing the linguistic hierarchy existing in different parts of Indian at different times.

The poets and the scholars and the nationalist leaders, who too participated in the growth of a discourse on Indian literature from the beginning of the twentieth century, never looked at India's multilingualism as a possible threat to the construction of the Indian nation. It was realised that the European concept of one religion, one language, one nation equation was alien to India. Although India was politically never united, a perception of cultural unity did exist throughout the history of India, and this perception was much stronger than a political unity. The nationalists' anxiety for discovering unity in diversity was reflected in creative as well as in discursive writings defining and defending the foundations of Indian nationality, which also became the arguments for the recognition of an Indian literature as a unified whole. Subramania Bharati, the most distinguished Tamil poet of this century, wrote in a poem addressing mother India, "Do you not know that in eighteen languages sweet / we sing your praises in manifold ways?" In another poem he upheld the theory of unity in diversity even more cogently: "Thirty crore faces she has / But life only one / Eighteen glorious tongues she has / But thought only one."

This metaphor of India with many tongues but one thought is the poetic transfiguration of the nationalists' ideology. In the 1920s Sri Aurobindo in defence of his formulation of Indian literature as an expression of "the Indian mind" pointed out the inadequacy of the framework of the pan-Indian language and recognised the role of all languages, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan, ancient and modern, regional and national in the making of the Indian mind.

Nor is it in the Sanskritic-tongue alone that the Indian mind has done high and beautiful and perfect things, though it couched in that language the larger part of its most prominent and formative and grandest creations. It would be necessary for a complete estimate to take into account as well as the Buddhistic literature in Pali and the poetic literatures, here opulent, there more scanty in production, of about a dozen Sanskritic and Dravidian tongues. The whole has almost a continental effect.⁵

This view of Indian literature was reiterated by Sarojini Naidu, the poet turned politician, in a speech at the first All India Writers Conference organized by the Indian PEN in 1945. "Why then," she wrote, "we ask should Indian writers all meet together in conference? Why? because India is one and indivisible. While her children speak with many tongues, they can only speak with one undivided heart."⁶ The metaphor of one and many culminated in 1954 in Radhakrishnan's oxymoron which became the motto of the Sahitya Akademi, the Indian Academy of letters, — "Indian literature is one, though written in many languages."

While many nationalist thinkers, including Sri Aruobindo, considered Indian literature as empirically valid, there were others who were anxious to construct it as something desirable. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University who established the first department of modern Indian languages in the country in 1919 in his concern for the development of a literature which he called *jatiya sahitya* (national literature), wanted a method to be devised which would allow the literatures produced in different linguistic areas of the country — Banga, Bihar, Utkala, Gurjara, Gandhar, Punjab and so on — "to be thread into one garland" and to be "assembled on the same shore of the Ocean of literature." It is unnecessary to go into the various issues arising out of this blue-print of an idealistic national project, except to emphasize that he thought it was primarily an academic project. "If we have to bring about the literary unity of India," he declared, "we shall have to do so through our universities..."⁷ The construction of an Indian literature was for him a nationalist agenda.

The nationalist construction of Indian literature as one though written in many languages need not be criticised as reductionist and

without any empirical validity. However, such an exercise initiates a significant debate on the nature of literature and its relation with a community. During the last two centuries which witnessed reorganization of communities and changes in the political boundaries of many countries, the infallibility of the language-literature relationship has also been questioned. The recognition of American literature as distinct from the British, though written in the same language, is no longer a matter of controversy. The case has been strengthened by the emergence of the Canadian and the Australian literatures also written in the same language. It only shows that a common language cannot marginalize the question of nationality, and that nationality or the consciousness of one's belonging to a community, political or social (and occasionally religious) can assert itself as the most important factor of one's identity. This is not to challenge the essential relationship between language and literature, nor to underestimate the linguistic materials that form literary structures, but to look at the literary activity of a given community in relation to their cultural context. The acceptance of a model of literature produced in a monolingual culture, or a culture where the supremacy of one language is legitimized as universally valid, is methodologically unsound. In areas where many languages operate the one language-one literature equation may satisfy the purists, but the community's response to literature transcends linguistic demarcations. I would like to quote a passage from *A Passage to India* as a convenient illustration of the attitude of a community towards literary texts written in more than one language, and how it is possible for the community to treat them as a part of a larger whole.

Presently Aziz chaffed him, also the servants, and then began quoting poetry: Persian, Urdu, a little Arabic. His memory was good, and for so young a man he had read largely; the themes he preferred were the decay of Islam and the brevity of love. They listened delighted, for they took the public view of poetry, not the private which obtains in England. It never bored them to hear words, words, they breathed them with the cool night air, never stopping to analyse, the name of the poet, Hafiz, Hali, Iqbal was sufficient guarantee. India — a hundred Indias — whispered outside beneath the indifferent moon, but for the time,

India seemed one and heir own, and they regained their departed greatness by hearing its departure lamented, they felt young again because reminded that youth must fly.

Let us not be distracted by the fact that the passage is part of a narrative strategy devised by the novelist to achieve a desired effect, and that it is also possibly a part of a construction of an Oriental Universe by a foreign observer. Let us also ignore the suggestion, if there is one here, of a coalescence of historical times projecting an India that never changes. The materials with which the passage is constructed are relevant: the participants in a literary activity which involves reading and listening, the linguistic competence of the participants, knowledge of three languages in varying degrees, enjoyment of literature as a public or social activity and the manner in which two themes, "the decay of Islam" and the "brevity of love", the one public, political and historical, the other private, personal and universal — are integrated, and finally how the three poets writing in different languages — Hafiz wrote in Persian only — and in three different periods, constitute the body of literature of a closed and homogeneous community.

The perception of literature as texts composed in different languages, but with thematological or ideological connections, is nothing new or extraordinary. It depends upon a particular community's exposure and attitude to languages and literatures. One can think of three types of situations of different languages coming into contact or being employed by a community. The early Christians created a corpus of works — a unified area of religious literature — in three languages—Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The more frequent situation of language-contact in history, however, is a by product of political and military conquest of one language group over another. Conquerors disrupt the linguistic homogeneity of the conquered societies, which in their turn try to negotiate with new situations. The contact situations between Latin and Greek, Arabic and Spanish, Arabic and Persian, English and various Indian languages, though not identical in character, are a few examples. The third type can be exemplified by Canada, where French and English operate in clearly specified geographical areas, each stoutly defending its uniqueness, and yet each contributing to the making of a national literature. The Indian situation is different

from all the three. Here is a continuous contact between languages of different families and between literatures of varying quality and of different traditions. Linguists have demonstrated that despite their distinct geneological identities the Indian languages converge to one another in their sound system, grammar and syntax. Emaneau argues for India as a linguistic-area because of the features of convergences. The convergence among literature is even stronger: there is a convergence towards common themes and genres, metaphors and symbols, and even towards a poetics and literary terms. On the basis of the convergence alone one can look at India as a literature-area too, which provided the rationale for an Indian literature.

Let us consider a few facts of the history of Indian literary activity. It is well known that 'Sanskrit' plays developed the convention of using Prakrits in the dialogues of certain characters according to their class, caste and gender. A play like the *Abhijnan Sakuntalam*, reflects a situation of coexistence of several languages, more or less equally comprehensible by the literary community. Such texts of linguistic mosaic can hardly be assigned to a monolingual literary tradition. Is it a Sanskrit text or a text written in Prakrits? How does one determine its linguistic character — by statistical criteria or by the hegemony of languages employed in it? This is an awkward example against the one language-one literature relationship but it cannot be set aside as an aberration. The community for which such a play was written and staged had no problem in accepting a multilingual text as a legitimate literary work.

The European classicists studied Greek and Latin together and viewed them as constituting a unified literary universe. The ancient Indians also viewed Pali, Prakrits and Sanskrit in a more or less similar manner. An allegorical account of the celebration of the birth of *Kavya purusa* (Poetry Person) by an ancient literary critic may be cited in evidence. Saraswati, the goddess of learning blesses her son *Kavya purusa* in the following words :

May sound and sense be your body, Sanskrit be your face, Prakrits be your arms, Apabhramsa your thighs, Paishachi your feet, and a mixture of different Prakrits your breast etc.⁹

This is clearly a counterview of monolingual literature and an articulation of a new idea of literature, a literature of a multilingual

community. Linguistically different though they are, the community considered the texts as components of a single literary universe.

In exploring evidence for the existence of this perception of literature one must not ignore the history of the growth of several artificial literary dialects in different parts of India as a result of language-blending or a special form of 'code-mixing'. The *Gatha Sanskrit* (or the Buddhist Sanskrit), an artificial dialect comprising Pali and Sanskrit in which are composed *Lalita Vistara*, *Mahavastu* and *Divyavadana*, initiated a convention that continued for many centuries. The same process is to be found in the *manipravala* (gem-coral) literature that existed both in Kerala and in Tamiladu. The fourteenth century text *Lilatilakam* defines it as a style mixed of Sanskrit and Malayalam — *bhasa samskrtayoga manipravalam*—'mani' indicating 'Sanskrit' and 'pravala' being Malayalam. "As time progressed," writes a Malayalam scholar, "this language became so multivalent and comprehensive that it set the aesthetic standard in literature for later ages and periods."¹⁰ The hybrid language was also used in theatrical performances like *kutiyattam* where the hero spoke Sanskrit, and the *Vidushaka* (the clown) in mixed Sanskrit and Malayalam. Tamil scholars have noticed *manipravala* being used in its proto-form even in the inscription and copper plates of the Pallava and the Pandya kings from the fifth century A.D. onward.¹¹ In the Pallava period, the *manipravala* was employed as a court language for a limited purpose. As a language of commentary, writes a Tamil scholar, "it was legitimately accepted by the scholars who were well versed in both Sanskrit and Tamil."

Such mixed languages strongly betray the hegemony of Sanskrit but they are also evidence of attempts to make use of two languages belonging to two different families (in this case Aryan and Dravidian) to create one body of literature, howsoever specialized that may be. It is also important to realize that the *manipravala* is not an exclusively Dravidian phenomenon, nor is *Gatha Sanskrit* exclusively Buddhist. This device of code mixing was employed in other parts of India as well as by other linguistic communities at different periods. In the sixteenth century the Vaishnava poets all over Eastern India created a new *manipravala*, which they named *Brajabuli*¹² (literally, the

language of Braja, the homeland of Krishna) — different from *Braj*, one of the major dialects of Hindi — where *mani* was not Sanskrit but Maithili, and *pravala* was any one of the three languages — Assamese, Bengali or Oriya — depending upon the poet's preference. This poetic dialect rejected the hegemony of Sanskrit and privileged a *bhasa* (one of the modern Indian languages) and thus tried to work out a new hegemonic relation among the *bhasas* themselves. Like *manipravala*, the *brajabuli*, too, had a large corpus of poetic literature and enjoyed a tremendous prestige as a poetic language. Sankaradeva, the versatile Assamese writer, chose Brajabuli as the medium of both *bargit* (devotional songs) and *ankiya nat*, a particular kind of religious drama. Even the song *Vande Mataram*, effectively the national anthem of India before independence but now considered to be a politically sensitive text, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in the last century, is written in two languages, Bengali and Sanskrit.

Another pronounced feature of the multilingualism connecting different linguistic-literary traditions in India is the literary bilingualism which has resulted either in the emergence of writers using more than one language in their creative experiments or of frequent switching from one language to another. The Kannada term *ubhaya kavi* (poet in two languages) came in use to designate writers practising in two languages, often Kannada and Sanskrit. The poet Vadiraja Tirtha (1480-1600), a contemporary of the more famous Purandara Das, wrote in both Sanskrit and Kannada as well as in Tulu, a minor language, for the untouchables of Karnataka. Pal Kuriki Somnath, the greatest of Telugu Saiva poets of the sixteenth century, wrote in Telugu and Kannada and Sanskrit. Vidyapati, the fifteenth century Maithili poet, wrote in Sanskrit and Abhatta and Prakrit as well as in his mother-tongue, Maithili.

The language-switching is only a configuration of the literary bilingualism as well as of the perception of literature cutting across linguistic boundaries. Radhanath Ray, the great nineteenth century writer of Oriya, had his apprenticeship in Bengali : his first work was in his mother-tongue, Bengali, and only later did he switch to Oriya. The more familiar example is Prem Chand, who too wrote in two languages, Urdu and Hindi, which are grammatically very close if not identical but culturally widely different. It is possible to multiply

examples to justify the existence of an idea of Indian literature as a complex of literatures, interdependent, closely related and unified by certain commonalities.

F. Kinck, the general editor of *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (1965) defends the sub-title in preference to 'English Canadian Literature' because the former term, he writes, "puts the name of this country first and suggests unity rather than division." The editor further elaborates in way of justification of the qualifier Canadian, as not simply a place but also as an environment. So far as the place is concerned, Canada is a number of "places". What is true of Canada is more true and valid for India, which if seen chronologically also represents a number of places and territories whose boundaries were never fixed for all time. Yet "India" always existed as a place, as an environment, as a space where various traditions emerged, thrived, collided and compromised with one another, and nourished themselves by accepting from one another. The India of Chandragupta Maurya (4th century B.C.) or the India of Akbar the Great (16th century) or the India just before independence (1947) and the India of our time are not identical in terms of political space. Yet the perception of India is not a political variable. It has a greater stability and longevity, it being a creation of the people's memory of a continuous journey through time. The idea of Indian literature is sustained by this perception of India where multiple traditions co-exist. Indian literature, as argued here, is neither any single literature claiming representative status on the basis of geography or population, nor a single literature claiming the highest literary excellence. This is also different from the view which projects Indian literature as an aggregate of all literatures produced within the country,— a view too mechanical to deserve any critical attention. It is a structure that recognizes the uniqueness of each literary system and the relation between them; a structure that accommodates pluralities of expressions, of responses and reception, and rejects the superimposed scheme to fit everything into a neat homogeneity.

The pluralities of expressions in different languages do not rule out the unities underlying them. This may be controlled by certain values shared by the communities living in India from historical times, but that is not a superimposed construction. The connection between

different literatures has been always recognized by the communities themselves. It is not only the relation between Sanskrit and various other languages, but between these younger languages themselves as well. I would like to point out a verse in the *Padma Purana*, in the section '*Bhakti Narada Samagama*', which can be taken as a projection of a synoptic view of a tradition both religious and literary, involving several languages. Bhakti, conceived as a woman speaks about her itinerary through India and different phases of her growth :

I was born in Dravid land, I flourished in Kamataka, and I spent some time in Maharashtra and also in Gujarat where I got emaciated. Of late I have come to Vrindavan and have attained full youth and beauty.

Bhakti speaks for herself: she is one but assumes different forms. The literature of Bhakti, too, — the major stream of medieval literature — is different in different regions and yet have an underlying unity. Narayana Tirtha, a 16th century Telugu poet and the author of *Krsanalia Tarangini*, is often referred as the reincarnation of Jayadeva, the twelfth century poet who wrote in Sanskrit. It is not that the readers were unaware of the basic differences between the two poets and their works, written in different languages and separated by geography and time. Similarly the popular belief that Lilashuka Vilvamangal was reincarnated as Jayadeva and Jayadeva was reborn as Narayana Tirtha, who again was reborn as Ksetrayya. The metaphor of reincarnation is a device of the indigenous folk poetics addressing issues of translinguistic relationship. It emphasizes the continuity of traditions, the various regional and linguistic configurations of thought and experiences claimed to be Indian.

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in the introduction of *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* (1963) divided the 'matter' of Indian literature into three major cycles — 'the cycle of ancient India', 'the cycle of the Province' and the 'cycle of the Islamic world'. He did not work out the relationship between various Indian literatures within thematological or genological models, which demonstrate clearly not only a simultaneity of emergence of different genres in different languages but also of thematic similarities between texts separated by language and region. They also indicate a remarkable identity of

response of writers to other languages, to foreign traditions as well as to the ancient and medieval traditions. The way a dialectologist maps the isoglosses and isomorphs over a geographical space, one can easily draw lines connecting the identical patterns of genres and themes in India. Such similarities or parallelisms in the formation of genres and themes do not obliterate the diversities of literary activities but make them even more conspicuous. In certain matters some literatures are distinctly different and those differences are jealously guarded by the respective literary communities. Even a casual glance at the genological and thematological data of Hindi and Urdu, linguistically so close, would show clear differences, areas of convergences notwithstanding. Tamil is yet another case where the anxiety to maintain its distinct Dravidian identity is very strong, although there are areas where Tamil, too, tends to converge towards the common patterns of literary development. But what is more significant is that when histories of individual language-literature are viewed over a long period, one realises the relations — the proximity and the distance, the tendencies of convergence and of divergence — are not fixed for all time. Geography, linguistic genealogy, historical experiences, religious sensibilities, regional literary traditions, attitudes towards the past, responses to foreign literatures and so on have all their distinct roles in the formation of literary communities. The Bhakti cult, for example, emerged as a special binding force among various literatures at a particular period of history. The Sufi mysticism provided another link with several language-literatures (Urdu-Sindhi-Panjabi) within another subgroup. The geographical proximity of Kannada and Marathi helped the growth of flourishing literary trade between them; the migration of the Bengali Vaishnavas made significant impact on Manipuri, a language belonging to Tibeto-Burman group and spoken in an area rather isolated from the 'main' land, though Assamese, geographically and culturally so close to Bengal, developed a radically different Vaishnavism, and consequently a different mode of Bhakti literature. The formations and reformations of literature into closer units is a continuous process. The recognition of the dynamics of the literary relationship brings one nearer to the idea of an Indian literature.

Indian literature is not a literature in the common sense of the term determined by its linguistic location. It is a larger construction

based on evidence of an unbroken continuity of themes, genres, symbols, canons and traditions. It is a complex of literatures involved in a continuous negotiation with one another, all aware of the existence of many traditions and their simultaneity — or what Professor V. K. Gokak once described as consubstantiation — which gives them a location in the history of Indian literary activity. Its boundaries are not fixed for ever, and even its components are not permanent. There has been a continuous arrangement and rearrangement among its linguistic components. Gypsy may be an Indian language but the Gypsy 'literature' is not a part of Indian literature. Persian was an important component of Indian literature for several centuries but it is no longer so. Like the concept of India in terms of beliefs and ideology, myths and history, symbols and geographical landmarks, Indian literature too is an internally constructed literary universe accommodating the diversities of experience and expression.

NOTES

1. Weber, Albrecht, *The History of Indian Literature*, translated from *Akademische Vorlesungen uber indische Literaturegeschichte* (Berlin, 1852, and ed. 1875) by J. Mann and Theodore Zachariah (London, 1878), Reprinted, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varnasi, 1961, p.1.

2. Winternitz, Maurice, *History of Indian Literature*, translated from *Geschichte Ver indischen Litterature* (in three volumes, Berlin, 1907) by S. Ketar (Vol. I, Calcutta University, 1926), p. 35.

3. For the debate on the nature of 'Indian Literature' see *The Idea of an Indian Literature : A Book of Readings*, ed. Sujit Muherjee, Central Institute of Indian Language, Mysore, 1981; Krishna Kripalani, *Modern Indian Literature*, Nirmala Sadanand Publishers, Bombay, 1968; also the address by Niharrajan Ray included in *Indian Literature*, ed. A Podder, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1972.

4. Sen, Sukumar, *Bharatiya Sahityer Ithas* (in Bengali). 1962, Introduction.

5. Sri Aurobindo, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, The Sri Aurobindo Library Inc., New York, 1953, p. 289.

6. See Srinivasa Iyenger, K. R. (ed), *Indian Writers in Council*, International Book House, Bombay, 1947, p. 10.

7. Mukhopadhyay (Mukherjee), '*Bharatiya Sahityer Bhavisyat*' (The Future of Indian Literature), included in *Jatiya Sahitya* (National Literature), Calcutta, 1924.

8. Emeneau, Murray B., 'India as a Linguistic Area', *Language in Culture and Society*, ed. Dell Hymes, Harper and Row, New York, 1964, pp. 642-50.

9. *Sabdarthau te Sariram Samskrtam mukham prakrtam bahu jaghanamp abhramsah paisacam padau uro misram etc. Kavya mimamsa*, I quoted in Ramaranjan Mukherjee, *Literary Criticism in Ancient India*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 1966. p. 3.

10. See *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, Vol. III, Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, p. 2584.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 2585.

12. See, Sukumar Sen, *History of Brajabuli Literature*, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1935.

REPRESENTATION OF CLASS IN PRESENT DAY INDIAN THEATRE : ARUN MUKHERJEE'S 'THEATRE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS'

Himani Bannerji

No movement can become a successful revolutionary struggle without the correct leadership of a revolutionary party. Should we forget this basic truth? History has already told us through what difficult processes and hard struggles the road to revolution is constructed. Can we deny that our middle class mentality has kept us really backward in bringing the countless masses to the revolutionary stage?

– Arun Mukherjee, “What Jagannath Really Thinks”,
Group Theatre, 1981.

Communism and socialism are not exactly favourite themes in the last few years in the West. Since the Berlin Wall came down, communism in Eastern Europe “collapsed” and the Soviet Union fell like Humpty Dumpty, all possibilities of these projects are considered exhausted. And in the new world of Columbus there is the New World Order.

But once, even in the West, not too long ago, this was not so, Socialism, if not communism, was an object of desire. New and old left debated about how to get there, the Soviet Union notwithstanding or sometimes because of. There are yet parts of the world, more populous than the West, in countries such as India, where these projects live on. Formations and deformations continue, cultural agendas, state politics and parties persist in organizing to make Marx and communism viable. They did so from the 1930s, they do so now, with difference of opinions among themselves, interpreting class and class struggle variously. This paper takes a tiny moment of that interpretation in the realm of culture to assess the theatre project of a group in Calcutta called *Chetana* (consciousness), headed by Arun Mukherjee, who is the director, playwright and important actor.

Descending from Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which started under the auspices of the Communist Party of India and was the inspiring source of all left/political theatre in India, this group aspires to put forth "thik natak". This Bengali expression means "correct theatre", the word "politically" being implied or understood. Like left political theatre, this theatre is preoccupied with the representation of class and class struggle. But how 'class' is to be understood or represented theatrically is not a settled issue for them anymore. The repertory of political theatre has expanded from socialist realism and proletarian heroism to problem plays on class, such as those of Bertolt Brecht. Therefore, the general influence of Soviet socialist realism and bourgeois Bengali theatre notwithstanding, the notion of a politically 'correct' theatre signals beyond Stalinist dogma to possibilities of rethinking 'class' and its forms of representation. It is from this point of view that Arun Mukherjee's theatre attracts our attention, because though partisan to class struggle and a social/communist revolution, he attempts to problematize both the issue and the form.

It is interesting to note a few biographical details about this director. Born in 1937 in Howrah, an industrial suburb of Calcutta, Arun Mukherjee comes from a declining rural petty bourgeois family, members of which have become professionals or white collar workers. Their income however continued to be low. Mukherjee himself, after some university education, became a clerical worker at the provincial legislature of West Bengal. It is here, in the cultural wing of the Trade Union organisation of the Writers' Buildings that he became more and more involved in theatre and eventually in 1972 started the group CHETANA with fellow workers. The group continues to this day with many of the same members and others who share the same white collar background, and who rehearse and act after work. Technically speaking, it is an 'amateur' group since the members are not paid as professional actors are.

Mukherjee's political beginning was in the mid-1960s. He did not have a high expectation of the traditional communist party that had divided into two in 1964. In the Bengali left scene it was the era of Maoism and the Chinese revolution. The influence of Soviet communism

had waned considerably. This signalled an interest in the countryside and the peasantry (which had always been a bone of contention in the Indian Communist movement), leading to the formation of a Marxist-Leninist movement (Naxalites). Some M-L groups precipitated uncoordinated armed struggles in the countryside of West Bengal with the idea of an imminent revolution and opposed the parliamentary politics of the Communist Party of India Marxist and the CPI. Arun Mukherjee's political education bears the stamp of this era. The countryside, with its poor/landless peasantry and the semi-rural industrial worker, became the focus of his theatre. Not interested in an epic version of class struggle found among famous left theatre directors of Calcutta, he attends to landless/poor peasantry or marginal individuals in the context of their class locations and everyday life. At the level of representation, both political and theatrical, he problematizes the concept of class by bringing to it questions of consciousness and the complexities of ideological formations.

Arun Mukherjee's theatre thematizes issues around peasant politics and life in West Bengal. What he says about the themes of one of his earliest plays holds, with some changes, for most of the later ones.

Though new characters have entered and the sequence of events have given rise to some new ones, it is the rallying of the peasants around the peasant leader (Bhuban Mandal), the fight over the harvest, and the victory of the humble peasant woman (Moyna's mother) over traditional customs and her emergence as a revolutionary figure—it is around these original themes that the action of the drama comes to life. (1)

Arun Mukherjee's early plays, such as *Ramjatra* or *Haraner Natjamai* (based on a famous story of Manik Bandopadhyay), try to display an integrity between social and political aspects of peasant life, particularly in projecting a symbolic and practical connection between oppression of women and peasantry. Political issues of property and power expressed as patriarchal class control, especially exerted by the ruling feudal classes towards women and poor peasants, are developed through formal experimentation. The use of parallel actions, plays within plays, religious cultural symbolism saturated with power connections, chorus and other forms of musical commentary are all

present in his plays. A conscious attempt at linking patriarchy and class is evident in the dedication of one of his plays (*Haraner Natjamai*) to his mother.

That conservative feudal environment where most of my mother's life was spent did not allow her the opportunity of Moyna's mother. I welcome that revolutionary situation which will smash the fortress of (feudal) customs, transform people and move them to a new level of consciousness. It is in this hope that I place in my mother's hands the story of Moyna's mother. (2)

A political interpretation of religious mythic symbolism in which the abduction of the mythic heroine Sita by the demon king Ravana (see *Ramayana*) is equated with the landlord's forcible occupation of land. An early example of Mukherjee's experiments with rethinking and representing class beyond the code of socialist realism is *Ramjatra*.

Haladhar: Ravan comes to Sita through trickery. The bird Jatayu gives his life to save Sita's honour. Unless you kill Jatayu you can't snatch away Sita. The peasants fight to save the honour of the earth—without killing the peasants the gang of jotedars (landlords) and the police won't be able to carry away the harvest. On the jatra stage (performance of folk-plays) Jatayu dies—but in the fight on the land the peasants won't die—never. Because now they have come together. Get up—stand up—there is courage, strength in you. (3)

Class and class struggle as social relations developing forms of consciousness and agency are presented at their best in the narrative multi-dimensionality of Mukherjee's most popular play to date *Marich Sangbad* (The story of Marich). It dramatizes Marx's statement about history as being the history of class struggle over a succession of stages of social production. The time span within the play ranges from the epic days of the *Ramayana* to the present, from mythologies to the streets of contemporary Calcutta. In between Mukherjee provides a detour and a parallel through the imperialist U.S.A. At each level he presents a dominated individual's response to pressures exerted by the state, its ideological apparatuses and the economic hegemony of the ruling classes at each stage of social production. In so doing, he teases out the possibilities and dimensions of class struggle through this individual's growing awareness of his political agency. In each phase

the play emphasizes the specificity of the situation and its historical stage, while containing it within the overall framework of class domination and resistance. In this way, though each sequence is embedded in its own historical setting, it is also dove-tailed into the next one.

The play starts in a Calcutta street where a street-entertainer, a juggler/magician/singer/actor (a common figure in large Indian cities, small towns, even villages) is drumming up an audience. Like all confidence tricksters he promises the impossible :

Babu (gentlemen), we show our tricks (plays) everywhere—the market-place, offices, courts—everywhere. Different kinds of tricks and different kinds of fun. I know, Babu, that everyone doesn't like the same type of entertainment. Some want to hear Ramdhun (Gandhi's favourite song in praise of Rama) and others to see dancing girls. Some want to laugh and cry at their own joys and sorrows—others like to hear foreign scandals. So Babu, I just mixed it all together and made a punch-whatever may be your taste-you'll get it here.

(drums)

Hey, hey-fun, games, and tricks-tricks of my magic wand. Yes Babu, this magic wand is my all. With just a touch of this I can make night into day. From the pages of history, from the legends of old times, from near and far, I can bring to you any person, any event—right now, right here. I can tell you what's cooking in every pot in the city, or what lurks in people's hearts—just with a touch of this magic wand. (4)

After both establishing his cultural identity and bragging about his prowess, the magician proceeds to construct the play for us. He claims to be able to resurrect the epic figures of the *Ramayana* but also, in attempting to please less feudal taste, he promises sequences which appeal to modern sensibilities. He promises scenes from America as well as from rural life of Bengal. The play constructs its frame of action through a humorous set of shuffles, mixtures, and shifts of different sequences. An important dramatic device is the use of 'confusion' created through frequent 'mistakes' made by actors portraying different types of ruling class. Run on lines expressing similar power relations are used to make the point that the ruling and

the ruled hold the same ideological social positions through history. Occasional sliding mid-speech from the dialogue of the mythic tyrant Ravana to that of the Bengali landlord or the CIA boss illustrates how these 'mistakes' are forms of political clarity. Here for example King Ravana, who is haranguing Marich, a magician among demons, to serve the state, is suddenly transformed into a Bengali landlord by 'mistake' :

The world trembles with the weight of my strength. He who disobeys my laws, my rules, follows his own judgement, will never be forgiven by Dashanan (Ravana). He (Rama) has insulted my beloved sister. Be he God Narayana in human form or the devil himself-Ravana's anger will burn him to ashes. For the very last time I tell you, if you have any gratitude, any sense of duty to your race, clan or mother, you will concede to my command, or else... (5)

(A short silence. Ravana looks this way and that, then suddenly says)

You won't have a stitch of land left to your name-your hut will burn down, and what's more there's an old complaint registered against you in the books of the police.

(Magician rushes forward with a mug of tea in hand)

Magician : Stop, stop. What's all this? Aren't you supposed to be Ravana?

(Other actors take their place)

Ravana : But you didn't sound the drum I had finished my speech
So... (6)

The scope of class/state relations extends even further, laterally, into the United States, where a CIA agent harasses a progressive liberal upper-middle class young man to go to Vietnam to serve his state. As he is being blackmailed with his father's involvement with the U.S. government, the patriotic injunction of President John F. Kennedy booms through the auditorium : "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country."

Similarities and dissimilarities in the historical particulars of each episode build towards a resolution where eventually all the subordinated characters step out of the magician/playwright's authorial/directorial control, as do the oppressed from that of the oppressor. They rebel against their script of class collaboration and proclaim a war against

their oppressors and learn to identify their enemies and allies. Their fight against the ruling class comes out in their fight against directorial/authorial injunctions. It is the most dispossessed, the poor peasant, who has served as a henchman for the landlord, who initiates this rebellion :

(When the landlord leaves him with money for a bribe Ishwar, the peasant, spits on it and throws it down).

Ishwar : Salt money! Salt money! (spits) Bastard, where do you get so much money from? The salt you stock up is the sweat of the poor peasants. Indebted to you for what? You have given me land, taken me to the hospital and saved my life with treatment? That's all for your own need! And that I, I became lame for life? Never again—I've found my own people, I'll join them. If I lose my home, my land, my life—if I live or die I'll fight alongside with them—but I won't take your money to start riot between brothers—I won't shed the blood of my own kin anymore. I won't shed blood...

(He attempts to leave. The magician moves forward).

Magician : Hey—Hey you there—were you supposed to say all that?

Ishwar : What?

Magician : The bastard! Just trying to get applause! Runs like the wind—the bastard! You've forgotten perhaps that you're lame? (7)

Ishwar's rebellious example begins to affect Marich, who has already submitted to Ravana's moral pressure—and the upper class American young man, Gregory, who has already committed suicide to escape his individual moral dilemma. This is first manifested by their joint attempt to break out of the authorial script to save Ishwar, whom the landlord is now determined to kill. The magician recognizes the power and potential for revolution in this mulishly stubborn old peasant. He says to the landlord Palhabu, who fails either to buy or coerce Ishwar.

Magician : No! It's beyond you to kill him. The bastard! If even dead men come forward to save his life, what can you do to him?

The situation is so bad now that you may need to summon even Ravana and the (American) President. (8)

But as an author/director he is himself invested in his own script—in the exigencies of a prescribed narrative—dramatic form driving him

towards a linear conclusion and thus conservatism. He wants or needs to, as a master of the script, control his characters, and produce an ending based on a prescribed scheme. As he puts it :

Magician : You are all conspiring to drown me. Do I have to end this play or not? If Ishwar doesn't die, this play won't end and you... (9)

But the course of dramatic action, as in everyday life and history, moves out of his grasp. Even those who once submitted to his script, collaborated and died, now resurrect themselves and want a second chance. The erswhile dead Marich approaches the magician :

Marich : I had to die an untimely death pressured by Ravana.

Magician : Listen to me—those others—they may make a mistake or two—but you can't move a hair's breadth.

Marich : Why?

Magician : Everything must happen the way the poet Valmiki has already written. Otherwise everyone is going to harass me. The original story of the epic is stuck in their mind—if I touch that I am going to be beaten up.

Marich : But if Valmiki has been unjust to Marich he doesn't have to be judged for that? Atone for that? (10)

Upon this critical inquiry the magician is prevailed upon to summon the ancient poet Valmiki, purported author of the *Ramayana*, to arbitrate whether the epic character Marich should have submitted and died without fight, and Gregory commit suicide instead of participating in political resistance. This is Valmiki's answer for why Marich had to die in the epic :

Valmiki : Let me tell you something—I may be an ancient poet, but the moment I put my feet on the present day earth, all contemporary knowledge was immediately imprinted in me. You think I don't understand what you mean? Class struggle? Struggle between the exploiter and the exploited? Kings fight. Some win, some lose, only the ordinary subject dies. You will say, all kings are kings. Kings run their kingdom on the backs of the subjects, a king's luxury lies in depriving them. Rama is a king, so is Ravana. Therefore they are both bound to be exploitative and brutal. I know that you don't see any distinction between a good and a bad king. But my children—you must keep in mind the

particular time when I wrote, and the people that I lived among at that time. (11)

After pointing out the roots of Gregory's problems, his bourgeois liberal individualism, (why do you only think about yourself—the world doesn't stop if you make a mistake. There are lots of people around who'll learn from your mistake), Valmiki identified Ishwar, the poor peasant, as a member of a revolutionary class.

Valmiki : He is not just a thug or an individual peasant strayed from his group. Now he is part of a group, of a great human collective. It won't be possible to exterminate the whole group. Even if your script decides to kill him, he won't die. (Moving towards Ishwar) Since you aren't the slightest bit afraid to die—you must keep on living. Don't lower your head in fear of king Ravana...

(Valmiki starts to leave)

Magician : But how's this game (play) going to end now?

Valmiki : This play? Is it going to finish so soon my brother? This game will go on for a long time now—lots of indecisions—dying and living—losses and victories—many, many things are yet to happen. Let the play continue—let it go on. (12)

This inconclusive play of class struggle for which not even a magician or an author/director or a political leader for that matter, can provide a script without the help of those who want to create their own history and theatre, gives us an idea of Mukherjee's "correct theatre". It accepts a complexity in class relations and forms of class struggle which accords individual class members a historical and revolutionary agency.

The other play which problematizes the issue of class at both an experiential and a collectively social level, is *Jagannath*. Inspired by the Chinese novelist Lu Xun's 'The True Story of Ah Q', about a poor peasant's accidental involvement with the Chinese nationalist movement and his eventual execution, Arun Mukherjee created a play which is a social problematic based on the character of a landless peasant. Jagannath, the central character or the anti-hero of the play, is a sum of those social relations which structure the everyday life of the rural poor. The play was intended to provide a depth and concreteness to our understanding of class and class politics in order

to relieve them of economic reductionism and orthodox communist dogmatism. Arun Mukherjee's reading of 'Ah Q' gives us an insight into his understanding of the poor peasantry. For Mukherjee :

...the character of Ah Q (by extension of Jagannath) contains the deprivations, dreams and frustrations of a man who inhabits the lowest depths of society. So in its essence it contains a spark of resistance—of protest, even though that language of protest may seem strange or remote (to us). This seeming contradiction, this opposition, is capable of inspiring any playwright. (13)

He further wrote :

...probably in 1970 or 1971 when I first read 'The True Story of Ah Q', he got fixed in my mind. How one could present such a character on the stage, with what perspective or environment could one bring him to life preoccupied me for seven years. Many in my group remember that I used to narrate little incidents or episodes to them. (14)

Lu Xun provided Mukherjee with the means to think through the question of the political role of the peasantry within the revolutionary process. The issue of class consciousness shifted from that of 'false consciousness' to that of the slow development of political agency beginning from the immediate class location and experience of an individual. This was particularly important in view of the fact that Jagannath stands for the peasantry and its revolutionary potential, in contrast to the traditional communist choice of the industrial proletariat.

Bengali political theatre, as political theatre elsewhere, interprets class struggle as an iconic moment of revolutionary confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed. But plays such as *Jagannath*, that explore this struggle in the context of a gradual development of political consciousness of an individual member of a class, are less frequently found. One reason for this might be that heroic/epic confrontational plays about class struggle fall within a well-established convention and are, therefore, easier to write. There is after all an immense drama, situationally provided, in a spectacle of classes locked into a combat to death, and if there is already a dramatic format for the free and ready rendering of such a situation, it is not difficult to come up with a play. The stabilized dramatic format is particularly adept at providing a linguistic and imagistic convention which might

be called a politico-theatrical rhetoric. With this coded language of class struggle the audience is inducted into a political ideological frame in a short-hand manner. The stages of the well-intentioned left all over the world groan beneath the weight of such plays where icons of forces fight each other with stereotypically fixed physical and verbal signs for weapons.

Arun Mukherjee's rejection of this type of precoded revolutionary play is part of an attempt to create a different play about class and revolution. Instead of handing out a hollow, stereotyped socialist realism, where a rhetoric and character types stand in for the specificity of class experiences and relations, he tries to connect individual experiences with forms of class-consciousness and class practices. This problematizing of class in a theatrical form necessarily relies on a complex elaboration of an unheroic and uncongenial material of everyday life while eschewing simple formulas of heroes and villains, good and evil. Here the dramatist deals with very common people and with forces of class consciousness which are intractable, divided and unyielding to easy formulations. Such a political play takes into account the fact that, irrespective of classes, individual consciousness are a mixture of different, contradictory practices and thoughts, living in the twilight zone of what Antonio Gramsci calls the realm of 'common-sense'. The task of political organisation, including that of the cultural activist, is to sort through this complicated mixture and define people towards a revolution. *Jagannath* may be considered as one very unusual attempt in Calcutta theatre to do so.

The absence in Bengali political theatre of such problem plays about class and individual consciousness is truly remarkable. The prevailing orthodox Leninism seems to have prompted the majority of left wing intellectuals to stay away from such enterprises. The fear of being branded 'bourgeois' or 'subjective' for showing too much interest in the personal or the experiential, seems ubiquitous. This acceptance on the part of the left of a split between the private and the public, the personal and the political, has occluded the possibility of theatrical realizations where individuals are understood socially and historically. A play such as *Jagannath* challenges this established practice in Indian political theatre and communist thought. It embarks

upon an exploration of the nature of the 'self' of a landless peasant by deconstructing his experiences and breaking the shell of solipsism around characters in bourgeois theatre. Mukherjee lets this character assume, however incompletely, a flow that is the same as that of the history of his society. The social and the personal are thus integrated to such an extent that even instincts are shown to be socially constructed through forms of class repressions and deprivations.

As Jagannath lives his marginal life in the landlord's abandoned cowshed, in a realm of undifferentiated common sense between fact and fantasy, it is this chaos that must be mapped to construct a play which explores the social relations and forms of consciousness that signal the specificity of his class-belonging. This understanding is crucial for developing a communist movement with a difference. The success of a popular communist party depends on this, since it must be party of these under classes. Any organizational work it undertakes must rely on a growth in popular political consciousness which is the subjective moment of a revolutionary practice. Arun Mukherjee shows his interest in class struggle, therefore, by exploring concretely the history and daily world of Jagannath, a seasonal labourer and a field hand, a vagabond and a drunkard. He belongs to the lowest rungs of a semi-feudal society in a colonized country. Mukherjee's interest in him is not psychological, but rather socio-historical, in showing through his staging and script that Jagannath is not a solipsistic personality structure. By the end of the play, through a set of complex dynamics, the 'self' of Jagannath is shown to be constructed by social relations and practices of a particular stage of development in late-colonial Bengal. (15)

The play shows us how Jagannath acts in history and society, even if he does not know that, and how they act in and on him. This is why the first act introduces the main shaping events in his life, and establishes thereby not only a steady frame of reference but also his characteristic responses and limits. It is only by understanding Jagannath's relationship with his fellow workers and other poor people, or with his employers and social superiors (such as the landlords, the police, political leaders), which produce the major incidents in his life,

that we can understand him at all. Each act puzzles out questions such as whether Jagannath or other characters can see themselves or each other as members of certain classes, and whether classes such as the rural poor to which Jagannath belongs can become revolutionary classes. Finally, the play also questions the political consciousness and class location of middle class intellectuals within a revolutionary process, who lead the various revolutionary agents, the industrial proletariat or the poor peasantry.

The play begins pertinently therefore in a prison cell, with some confusion among several middle class nationalist leaders about the identity of a certain Jagannath Das. The British government has executed him as a nationalist freedom fighter, but this political group feels no identification with him, not even in an extended, extra-organizational sense. They claim that he was 'involved' with them through 'sheer circumstances'. He is, for them, 'a dead man... like most men in our country'. (16) And yet when the erstwhile nationalist intellectual wants to become a political writer, he is haunted by the ghost of a nonentity called Jagannath. This intellectual's exploration of a peasant's identity also investigates the political problems and needs of the urban petty bourgeoisie. An understanding of the poor peasantry becomes an essential way of understanding himself and his own politics. As the dialectical interplay between confusion and clarity progresses through the play, establishing Jagannath's identity and social matrix, complex dimensions of his character come into view. This complexity rules out the position that Jagannath (or the landless poor peasantry) is a 'dead man' or 'that most men in our country are dead'. It becomes apparent from the first act, as much indeed as from the title of the play, that Jagannath is in the process of formation and transformation, as signalled by his contradictions. The name Jagannath, meaning "The Lord of the World" alludes to the legend of Lord Jagannath of Puri (Orissa), who was forced to reveal himself too soon (an aborted god, as it were) and is thus crippled yet all-powerful. Used in this context as the name of one of the least socially powerful and most passive characters conceivable, the name itself points to both the actuality of lack of power in the present and the potentiality for power in the future.

Through an ironic mode, contrary to the elitist formulation, the play shows the rural poor as alive and alert. They are intensely aware at the level of experience of their own situation within power relations prevailing in the village. Jagannath and others of his class, male and female servants and field hands, have a consistent sense of who their enemies are. When Jagannath fantasizes revenge with his newly acquired gun, for instance, it is the landlord Das Babu that he pretends to kill, not members of his own class, even though they continually tease and revile him. It is from this fundamentally experimental level of anger and frustration that he over-reacts to being called a 'crippled god'. He knows of his own impotence and does not consider it intrinsic, even though he cannot exactly comprehend the extra-local forces that control the lives of people like him. He also works out a spontaneous, however partially satisfactory solution to his dilemma of inaction. He creates compensatory fantasies of revenge. Thus every humiliation in real life is reenacted to a satisfactory conclusion and thereby absorbed into a more coherent world view, where disparate actions obeying laws of cause and effect become comprehensible, and to a degree tolerable. Denial of actual control in life is compensated by, and to a rudimentary extent achieved through, these games of control. The best example of this complicated process is the way Jagannath dies. He cooperates in his own death. On the very steps of the gallows he puts up a shadow fight with his fellow-servant Nanda, and achieves a victory through a greater act of heroism by actively putting the noose around his own neck with a smile. But this 'show' or fantasy of victory is much more than that. Though it is a sham on one level, on another it is a real achievement. For even though he must die now, he dies having created his own version of his death by creating a meaning for his death (and therefore his life) as it were. Until now, since he had no inkling of the use his death had for the British government, all was incomprehensible. But now, in competing through his death with his fellow class member Nanda, who has become a freedom fighter, who is 'in a manner of speaking another me', (17) he has created a personal ground and form for personal actions in relation to social and political power. What *Jagannath* lacks is the knowledge which is comprehensive of the extra-local nature of the power relations which structure each

level of local formation. This knowledge can come to him, as to others, only from being involved in political praxis in the context of an emancipatory revolutionary organization. To miss this point of the play, and to see Mukherjee as glorifying spontaneity, is to miss the vital point about the complex view of class and class struggle we find in *Jagannath*.

Read from the above perspective, the first act of the play presents the most superficial level of events in Jagannath's life. But the rest of the play displays the various levels of 'being' and the political process of his 'becoming'. When Nanda, another poor peasant who mirrors Jagannath, gathers the villagers into a group protesting the injustice of the landlord Das Babu, we have a rudimentary formation of a political collective, and by implication, class action. This provides an instance of how immediate experience with its keynote of anger, combined with the impinging and surrounding social forces, can and do widen the rift at the level of felt contradictions, thus creating the possibility for class consciousness and struggle. Otherwise one cannot account for the fact that Jagannath's 'other' Nanda, joins the nationalists, or that the villagers distrust the police and their spies, or explain Jagannath's statement—'but if you revolutionaries were with me, I could do it too' (kill the landlord). (18) The presence of nationalist leaders has helped him to make a very important link here between his personal life and actions and a greater set of social forces which could enhance, empower or diminish him. This makes it imperative that we, the audience, should also accept him as both a potential and an actual person, and allow for a change of consciousness which extends beyond, but begins from, the immediate.

The play presents us with an ambivalence about the political role of the middle class, either in terms of nationalist armed struggle, or relatedly, by implication, in terms of vanguard communism in India. Initially, the playwright's attitude seems to be a critical one. Jagannath himself, after his death, becomes a critical commentator of the middle class intelligentsia's perception of him or of the poor peasantry as a whole. Bits of dialogue point out the middle class intelligentsia's sentimentality and patronizing attitude towards their social inferiors, their proneness to a radical rhetoric while displaying a class-based

inability to comprehend their everyday life. Through this dramatic device the middle class nature and historical understanding of political nationalism or vanguard communism in India become suspect and questionable. As we already know, the nationalist and Marxist-Leninist armed struggle were led predominantly by urban intellectuals who came from the cities to liberate the peasantry with their ideals and guns. Occasionally a peasant like Nanda joined their ranks on the basis of spontaneity and courage. About these exceptional ones who transcend their ordinary lives the nationalists are forced to say: "we had to take him with us!" (19) In fact, it is not clear from any incident in the play how much more advanced these leaders are in the direction of a real political understanding than people like Jagannath or Nanda. It seems that Arun Mukherjee intends us to look upon nationalist intellectuals from a critical perspective, and as much in need of development of class consciousness and a strategy of class struggle as the peasantry itself.

But the other pole of Mukherjee's ambivalence regarding vanguard politics of middle class intellectuals is a type of admiration for revolutionary adventurism or romanticism. The theatrical form or representational stylistics invest the middle class freedom fighters in the play with an aura of heroic sacrifice, presenting them within the nationalist (bourgeois) iconography of men who died for their country and people. Their desperate selfless courage and seeming class betrayal, when contrasted with the desperate selfish violence of the landlords, leaves one with little more choice. We judge the movement by moral criteria—courage, sincerity, self-sacrifice and so on—which are far from relevant to any revolutionary political assessment. But we also know that these characteristics might be the hallmarks of both right and left wing politics. In spite of an attempt at treating theatre as a medium of social analysis we are encouraged to respond from our hearts rather than from our heads. This lulls our criticality and prevents us from asking basic political and programmatic questions, such as, what is the social and political agenda of the nationalist movement? What are their analytical and theoretical bases? What are their actual plans for a 'national' reconstruction after the so-called 'actions' have taken place? Nowhere are we faced with these questions or their answers,

but rather with a moral view which transcends politics and social organization and advocates courageous self-sacrifice—a lesson that the landless, hungry and hunted Indian peasantry neither need to, nor ought to learn. Our mixed response to these freedom fighters therefore comes from the writer-director's own ambivalence in constructing both the text and the production. In a play which is as a whole critical, which deconstructs the 'facts' of Jagannath's life, structuring the text with an expanding significance, nationalist politics of the middle class escapes a critical reconstruction. They remain in the leadership role, as a force above criticism, in our hearts if not in our heads. However, to be fair to the playwright—director, who also acts the part of Jagannath, we must admit that this is also due to the accumulated conventions, lores, images and feelings through which we view Indian petty bourgeois nationalism's scanty attempts at armed struggle.

A discussion about Arun Mukherjee's theatre and class project is incomplete without citing some critical response to his work, particularly the response of those who speak from within the settled tradition of Indian communism. Their criticisms further indicate how accustomed the CPI or CPI(M) intellectuals have become to a particular format of political theatre created through a combination of Soviet socialist realism and Bengali colonial bourgeois theatre. In an issue of the left theatre journal *Group Theatre*, devoted exclusively to *Jagannath*, Ashok Sen writes :

The main theme of the play is this, that those with whom we are playing the game of revolution are nothing except stupid animals... though it is true that as a play, and a production, *Jagannath* has been highly praised by its audience—and it's right that he should get the just praise for skillful director—yet in terms of his content the playwright has done violence to an honest political perception. This is especially true when the agricultural labourers all over India are becoming organized in order to become a driving force for a revolution. (20)

Indranath Bandopadhyay, a prominent culture critic of the CPI(M), also detects problems with the play's portrayal of the peasantry, particularly in terms of its negativity, and what he considers a hopelessness. As he puts it :

Some have said that Jagannath is actually a representative of those who are daily beaten down, and who keep their protest within themselves rather than voice it, and that Jagannath is an attempt to show how terrible the fate of such a person is. And, of course, this portrayal is an indirect exhortation to others to voice their protest. They claim that in order to do this the playwright has taken recourse to Brecht and through a marshalling of discrete episodes he has synthesized *Jagannath*. But while it is true that Brecht has such plays where negative characters play central roles, Brecht has never sought to hypnotize his audience by avoiding to focus the light of Marx's philosophy on the main conflicts of society and the epic of life. (21)

Indranath in fact goes so far as to suggest, as a responsible communist, what the direction of the play should have been. According to him :

If this play could analyze the economic, social and political class conflicts of its time, and lay them out in *causal sequences*, then the point of Jagannath's defeat could have resonated and overwhelmed (its audience). Then it would have been possible to show *the inevitable march of events and their results* through a contrast between the compromising National Congress, with its lack of a mass base and class consciousness, and the revolutionary, armed 'terrorist' movement. *Jagannath* could have portrayed that desperate urge of the newly born proletariat towards the ideals of a revolutionary communism, which in the 1920's impelled it in increasing numbers to take the vow of travelling the path (of communism) illuminated by class consciousness. (22) (italics mine)

These somewhat lengthy quotations from left intellectuals are really revealing both for their content and language. There are certain important political and aesthetic assumptions behind these statements. Their context is normative as to how the proletariat, rural or urban, must be portrayed if the playwright professes a socialist or communist politics. Their depiction must be those of proletarian heroes of epics of class struggle or revolutionary postures, of muscular men with optimistic, revolutionary postures—of men who have taken the vow of travelling the communist path, whose shining light is Marxism and

Leninism. Questions, doubts and negativity are not a part of this tradition. In fact there are no questions—there are only answers. The language of the play—its overall tone and stylistics—must actually be the rhetoric of the communist party member, which in fact is the language of Lenin's "party literature". Though the name of Brecht is mentioned in Indranath's earlier statement, yet Brecht's importance is not methodological or political in terms of what a playwright may learn from him, but rather that of legitimation—as a part of the established classics and canon of communist literature. Marx, Brecht, Lenin and Stalin now inhabit the same pantheon, and according to the 'laws' of class struggle, the proletariat and (now) the poor peasantry are chosen classes for the redemption of history. According to these critics, and many others, *Jagannath* has definitely violated the canon of a correct communist theatre or even of political theatre.

Arun Mukherjee himself, however, does not agree or abdicate the role of a political, socialist theatre producer. He feels that *Jagannath* "is a political play—a dream of hope—a progressive play. If I didn't think so I would never produce it". He further says :

If we got a well-reasoned and analytical argument from those who consider that the basic characteristic of *Jagannath* is directorial virtuosity or great acting and emptiness or faultiness of (political) content, we might have had an exchange of views, and corrected ourselves. But the little we got mainly consisted of criticism of *Jagannath*'s lack of political awareness and competition with Nanda, his end at the level of the personal rather than that of a higher and greater consciousness. This is the basic complaint. What I want to ask is that if *Jagannath* himself does not arrive at a higher level, does the play as a whole become reactionary as a result of that? If the main character in a play does not appreciate the need for revolution, or cannot place himself in the revolutionary process, what is there to prevent the audience from doing so? The background on which the play is based—the flow of events that elaborates it—do they not reveal the peculiarities of a class society, or create an atmosphere of class struggle? (23)

Arun Mukherjee's attempts to problematize theatre of class can only remind us of the revolutionary project of Antonio Gramsci, who

in advocating the politicization of the civil society, recommended that each stone of common sense and everyday social practice be turned and examined as a routine of revolutionary praxis. Politics of representation with regard to class becomes complicated in the work of Arun Mukherjee when we deal with the theme of gender. Social relations of power which structure patriarchy are often kept distinct and separate, even when he makes a parallel presentation of these two forms of oppression. At all points where he makes statements and projects situations where a woman is being coerced by her social superiors, he is unable to see that social relations of property, which he calls 'class', are essentially gender relations. Neither analytically, nor theatrically, either in terms of dramatic conventions or narrative, has he or any other 'left' (or right) playwright in Bengal been able to uncover a reflexive relation between gender and class? Bourgeois theatre's formal conventions and orthodox Stalinism, which share the same view of women and gender and separate them from the 'real' politics of class, do not allow for such an innovation. Bengali political theatre is over determined by both—and Mukherjee is not a complete exception to this rule. If we examine the text of Bertolt Brecht's play *The Mother*, which is an adaptation of a novel by Maxim Gorky, and Arun Mukherjee's translation and production of it, we can see how Mukherjee differs from Brecht in this matter of gender and class. We can also see how the convention of socialist realism relies on a patriarchal depiction of a male hero to put forward the image of a proletarian revolutionary.

Brecht's *The Mother* is centred on the issue of developing a revolutionary class consciousness which connects personal experience and emotions to politics and class consciousness. It involves a change not only for an individual woman—Pavel's poor, loving, working class mother, who becomes involved in communist politics to protect her son—but for members of other classes and the other sex. While the working class is not privileged as a politically omniscient class with its so-called 'proletarian perspective', the communist intellectual from the petty bourgeoisie is not the vanguard of the revolution either. It is assumed that workers (both men and women), union organizers, and petty bourgeois intellectuals learn to be political together, in workplaces,

ordinary life and literacy classes. The theme of transformation stands at the centre of the play, in which the least privileged member of society, an old working class woman, slowly assumes her place in the struggle for Russian revolution. This transformation happens for all the characters both at the level of personal values and of politics and intellect. It is firmly rooted in the present—in an immediate everyday experience which has enough in it to get mother and the other characters started on their revolutionary path. Considered thus, the story of *Mother* is that of the maturation of a new revolutionary consciousness, of the new age which lies in the womb of the old. The real child in this play is not Pavel, but the as yet unborn Russian revolution, whose mother or nurturer is a grand social collective—namely the revolutionary people of Russia. The concept of motherhood is thus displaced from that of biology and assigned gender roles. As Brecht saw it, irrespective of biology, both men and women could ‘midwife’ and nurture or mother a revolution or a child. This same notion of a non-biological, collective motherhood is also to be found in Brecht’s allegorical play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, where the child Michael stands for land to be made into a collective, beyond private property. The members of the new farming collective represented by his nurse Grusha become the nurturing and protective mother.

The revolutionary consciousness put forward by Brecht questions sexual and social divisions of labour, as well as of familial relations—as manifested in personal possessiveness. Questioning gender roles is as vital to Brecht’s understanding of the revolutionary process as questioning mental and manual divisions of labour. Class and gender cannot be conceived apart from each other. Pavel’s mother advances step by step along the lines of literacy beyond gender, into full political activism. And as she transforms from ‘mother’ to ‘comrade’, so does Pavel from ‘son’ to ‘comrade’, her equal. Now she can carry on printing her leaflets without guilt or concern, while Pavel, immediately upon returning from his exile in Siberia, can prepare their lunch. In fact, far from glorifying conventional motherhood, Brecht throughout the play wages a fight against the self-denial, sacrifice, inequality, possessiveness and dependency that are implicated in it. Brecht retains

the nurturing connotation of the word 'mother', but moves it beyond gender and the property relations of the family.

How much of this class politics inclusive of gender is to be found in Arun Mukherjee's *Ma*? The honest answer to this is very little. This play, its structure and presentation, contains a very different understanding of class and class politics and use of theatre forms from that of Brecht. It is a play constructed within the group theatre's political plays — with the history of the IPTA tradition, derived from socialist realism and the world of Bengali bourgeois theatre. Class remains unproblematic both in conception and presentation in the context of gender. Here we see an affinity between a Second Internationalist, Stalinist communism and theatrical conventions of Bengali bourgeois theatre of sentiment. Class is conceptualized by Mukherjee as an economic category, while gender (motherhood) remains in the separated sphere of culture. Therefore the former is a revolutionary theme while the latter is not, except that certain gender traits of women may be summoned to the aid of class struggle. Through conventions of sentimental family drama form, the mother is presented as a super mother. She comes through as an ultimate manifestation of the protective, all-sacrificing mother of Bengali social drama and films, who in the desperation of her love for her son takes up the dangerous task of distributing illegal political leaflets. And not only her initial, but her end motivation remains the same, except that by the end she has become a 'type' of a communist heroine and an icon of revolutionary romanticism. She has become the ideal good woman that the revolution needs to nurture and support the revolutionary male hero. The revolutionary praxis of this woman does not move the director to using an acting style that pushes the character beyond gender roles and informs the audience on relations between gender and class. Instead conventional gender roles are actually reinforced and glamourised by the melodramatic conventions of the pathetic wedded to the heroic. In order to transform the text into a palatable story of mother love and sacrifice, Mukherjee mostly edited out large parts of Brecht's text which included discussions among woman characters of the play about religion, marriage, motherhood and other forms of patriarchal social and moral norms. Whereas these scenes in Brecht show the growth

of a critical process among women, in Mukherjee's presentation what he retains is treated as 'incidental', as 'women's talk'. This play, as presented in this production, unlike *Jagannath* or *Marich Sangbad* does not induct the audience into a critical revolutionary thinking process about class and social transformation, but rather wishes to create a faith and sentimentality about revolution.

An overall assessment of Arun Mukherjee's 'correct theatre' shows it to be a mixture of bourgeois common sense and socialist criticality. He oscillates between problem plays, 'typical' Indian communist theatre which is canonically sanctioned and Bengali bourgeois big stage theatre. What is a relief and a difference is that he does not have a grand theatre philosophy which rehearses revolution on the stage—but has an interest in rethinking and theatrically representing the notions of class struggle and class consciousness in a non-reductionist way. He makes good use of the fact that the glamour of socialist realism has palled in the last twenty five years, and the repertoire of Bengali political theatre has been enhanced by the technical innovations and theatre theories of Brecht, Irwin Piscator, Peter Weiss and many others. This has made for a representational apparatus which allows a depiction of class which treats it as a question, a point of exploration, rather than providing the audience with an icon of a reified economic category.

NOTES

1. Arun Mukherjee, *Haraner Natjamai* (1979), preface p.2. (all translations from the Bengali are mine — HB).
2. Ibid., dedication.
3. A. Mukherjee, *Ramjatra* (1983), p. 64.
4. A. Mukherjee, *Marich Sangbad* (1983) pp. 1-2
5. Ibid., pp. 27-8.
6. Ibid., pp. 28-9.
7. Ibid., pp. 31-2.
8. Ibid., p. 46.
9. Ibid., p. 48.
10. Ibid., p. 49.
11. Ibid., p. 56.

12. Ibid., p. 58.

13. Arun Mukhopadhyay (Mukherjee), 'Jagannather manner katha?' (What Jagannath really thinks), *Group Theatre*, no. 2-3, 1981, pp. 3-16, p. 5. (published from Calcutta).

14. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

15. As Engels points out in 'Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', the content of this idea of subjectivity is that ability which enables a person to understand their experiences in terms of social relations at a particular stage in history, and to transform these historical and social 'causes' into immediate motives. See also Engels, 'Socialism, Utopian and Scientific', See Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, on this issue and its essentially aristocratic visionary or even petty-bourgeois character. Also the petty-bourgeois, class transcendent visionary politics, is remarked upon as being Utopian in Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*, where the critique of Proudhon's political economy and politics are integrally linked. Here he also speaks of Proudhon's moralism (conscience) and sentimentality which are shown as political impetus (feelings) rather than any accurate social analysis.

16. A. Mukherjee, *Jagannath*, p. 57.

17. Ibid., p. 10.

18. Ibid., p. 67.

19. Ibid., P. 65.

20. *Group Theatre*, p. 59.

21. Ibid., p. 75.

22. Ibid., p. 79.

23. Ibid., pp. 14-5.

MANIPULATION OF POETIC LANGUAGE : FRAGMENTATION OF THE VISIBLE IN DU BELLAY'S *LES ANTIQUITEZ DE ROME*

Vivian S. Brown

Much has been said about the ruins motif as an artistic device in *Les Antiquitez de Rome*. Ingrid Daemmrich in her article, "The Function of the Ruins Motif in Du Bellay's 'Les Antiquitez de Rome,'" echoes the opinion of many literary critics when she explains how the decay and destruction ever present in *Les Antiquitez* symbolize the futile efforts of man to produce a lasting monument to his glory and the victory of time, chance and fate over his majestic achievements.¹ Dorothy Coleman in like manner states that the sonnet sequence is a detached contemplation of the inconstancy of things, woven around the "Sic transit gloria mundi" topos, and suggests a "désenchantement" with the world on this earth.² Alfred Satterthwaith agrees, demonstrating that it is possible to view Du Bellay's poem as united by a single theme: the inconstancy of all sublunary things.³ Other critics for example, Thomas Green, emphasize the imagery of exhumation, bringing to light, the theme of archaeological probing and physical restoration which can be found in the sonnet sequences.⁴

Certainly these are all valid interpretations of Du Bellay's famous sonnet. However, few authors have attempted to fully explore in *Les Antiquitez* Du Bellay's use of the poetic imagery of the ruins to shape, manipulate and transform the image of the king.

This image, the representation of the king that is presented to the world, is fully under the control of the writer through his literary creations. The usefulness of literature in the propagation of the royal image is an important element of Du Bellay's poetic theory as presented in *La Deffence et illustration de la lanque francoyse*. The task of the poet is to inscribe perpetuity into the image of the king so that whether "presens, absens, vyfz et mors,"⁵ the public is presented with a glorious representation of the king's character. Du Bellay presents the poet as the manipulator and purveyor of the goods which

can be obtained from literary creativity. His power is shown through the control that he exercises over the poetic image and Du Bellay demonstrates through *Les Antiquitez*, as we are about to see, his ability to modify, consume, destroy or appropriate certain images.

Louis Montrose explains that by representing the monarch in a text, the poet ineluctably reconstructs the monarch as a textual product.⁶ This upsets the traditional relationship between the poet and the king and in Du Bellay's redefinition of the role of the poet, the latter is seen as exercising power over the king. The political impact of such a role reversal is made explicit in *les Antiquitez* as we discover how the poet uses violence to obliterate, to transform or to modify the poetic image of Rome's glory. Violence in his imagery is shown to be an instrument of reordering and reconstruction.

In sonnet 4 we see the evidence of this reordering or restructuring of Rome's glory :

Celle qui de so chef les estoilles passoit
Et d'um pied sur Thetis, l'autre dessous l'Aurore,
D'une main sur le Scythe, et l'autre sur le More,
De la terre, et du ciel, la rondeur compassoit :

Juppiter ayant peur, si plus elle croissoit,
Que L'orgueil des Geans se relevast encore,
L'accable sous ces monts, ces sept monts qui sont
ore
Tumbeaux de la grandeur qui le ciel menassoit.

Il luy mist sur le chef la croppe Saturnale,
Puis dessus l'estomac assist la Quirinale,
Sur le ventre il planta l'antique Palatin :
Mist sur la dextre main la hauteur Celiene,
Sur la senestre assist L'eschine Exquillienne,
Viminal sur un pied, sur l'autre l'Aventin.'

In the first stanza, Du Bellay constructs the image of a proud and glorious Roman Empire, her head lifted high above all other empires, past and present : "... Celle qui de son chef les estoilles passoit." The second and third verses of this stanza are used by Du Bellay to evoke feelings of admiration for the vast expanse of the

empire's borders. "Et d'un pied sur Thetis, l'autre dessous l'Aurore." The mention of Thetis, the mythological sea goddess, combined with the image of Rome ruling the morning skies sends a message that Rome's power extends well beyond the seas and around the world. Joukovsky indicates that the geographical periphrasis in verse 3 is often used by writers of this period "pour évoquer le rêve de la puissance de la Rome antique."⁸

"Comme les néolatins italiens, (Du Bellay)
admire l'étendue de l'empire. Ce pouvoir
s'égale au monde, au grand tout, à la rondeur
du globe, à la terre et à la mer, et touche
aux contrées les plus lointaines."

Rome is presented at its pinnacle of greatness. Then Du Bellay reverses the image, and the reader is a startled witness to its utter destruction and entombment as described in the latter stanzas of this sonnet.

In sonnet 2, the seven hills of Rome were praised as seven monuments of greatness. Now in sonnet 4, Du Belley deconstructs that image, rearranges the stones and reconstructs, not a colossus of greatness, but "... Tumbeaux de la grandeur."

L'accabla sous ces monts, ces septs monts qui
sont ore
Tumbeau de la grandeur qui le ciel menassoit.
(vv. 7-8)

Let us examine now more closely this new construction which Du Bellay fashions out of his vast poetic resources. The seven hills which were used in the first part of the sonnet to exalt Rome are now arranged in such a way in the latter part of the sonnet to entomb Rome.

Il luy mist sur le chef la croppe Saturnale,
Puis dessus l' estomac assist la Quirinale.
Sur le ventre il planta l'antique Palatin

Mist sur la dextre main la hauteur celiene,
Sur la senestre assist l'eschine Exquillienne,
Viminal sur un pied, sur l'autre l'Aventin

Rome which was at first pictured as standing upright, supported by the hills, her head reaching to the sky, is now sprawled

on the ground, the hills no longer a support, but a crushing instrument of annihilation. Each of the seven hills, the Saturnale, the Quirinale, the Palatin, the Celienne, the Exquillienne, the Viminal, and the Aventin, has been "textually reconstructed"¹⁰ to fit the purposes of the author. The Rome that was alive and governing the world in the first stanza is now dead. The seven hills, the pedestal, upon which she once stood has now been reconstructed and become her tomb.

The overwhelming power of the poet is demonstrated by this sudden reversal of Rome's fortune. Michel Foucault explains that power manifests itself through the force which is exerted over things and through the ability to modify, use, consume or destroy.¹¹ In sonnet 4, Du Bellay has indeed, as we have shown, modified at will the vision of Rome which is presented to the reader. The power of the poet somehow is inscribed in the body of Rome using the seven hills. This inscription is emphasized by the language Du Bellay uses to describe the burial of Rome. Let us consider for instance the verb "accabla" in verse 7. In modern French, it can be interpreted as meaning to crush, to weigh down or to overburden, but in the sixteenth century this verb enjoyed another semantic interpretation, "attaquer par la parole."¹² It is through the manipulation of the language that Du Bellay attacks Rome and asserts his power. In verse 9 the reader witnesses the inscription of the poet's power on the literal head of Rome: "Il luy mist sur le chef la croppe Saturnale." The head, which once dwelt among the stars is now not only abased and buried beneath the earth, but the poet further humiliates the city by insulting it and placing it beneath "la croppe Saturnale." Du Bellay has demonstrated his power to control the image of Rome by transforming the image of glory in the first verse into an image of shame (verse 9).

In verses 10 and 11 the author continues to inscribe his power in the body of Rome: "Puis dessus l'estomac assit la Quirinale / Sur le ventre il planta l'antique Palatin."

From the head Du Bellay moves directly to the disembowelment and entombment of the torso represented here by the words "estomac" and "ventre." The torso contains the vital organs which perform the various life sustaining and reproductive functions of the body. The violence of this radical destruction of the old authority, represented

by the body of Rome is necessary in order for the poet to assert his new authority.

This violence is also manifested in *La Deffence*, as Du Bellay calls for the pitiless desecration of Rome :

La donq', Francoys, marchez couraigeusement vers cete superbe cité
romaine et des serves depouilles d'elle ... (DI 338)

The same phrase in this passage which flatters Rome "cete superbe cité romaine," also calls for her destruction, "des serves depouilles d'elle." Further on in *La Deffence*, Du Bellay repeats this same pattern of flattering and insulting Rome, which we found in the fourth sonnet :

Pillez moy sans conscience les sacrez thesors
de ce temple delphique, ainsi que vous avez
fait autrefois : et ne craignez plus ce muet
Apollon, ses faulx oracles, ny ses fleches
rebouchées. (DI 340)

Margaret Ferguson describes this attitude as a "vacillation between sacramental reverence and violence."¹³ Rome is lauded by Du Bellay for being the source of truth and enlightenment for the civilized world. These are the "sacrez thesors" which he so often glorifies. Rome is continually praised for being the source of "rare et antique erudition" (DI 209) from which the philosopher, concerned with the essential problems of man in his world and with the definition of man's relation to nature and to God, is able to form a valid interpretation of life.

Ferguson makes these remarks in her article, "The Exile's Defense : Due Bellay's 'La Deffence et illustration de la language francoyse,' "concerning the reverent and critical attitudes that Du Bellay displays toward Rome in *Les Antiquitez* :

The sequences offer ... another instance of an oscillation between a defensive (Reverent) and an offensive (critical) rhetoric ... the poet demystifies and mystifies Rome, criticizes and admires it. In *Les Antiquitez* Du Bellay combines his attitude of reverent humility toward the "Divins Esprits" with a critical examination of Roman history. He frequently blames Roman hubris for causing the city's downfall and often alludes to the myth of genealogical warfare between the giants and the Olympian

gods to portray Roman history as a series of violent struggles for supremacy ...¹⁴

Du Bellay uses these images of legendary or historical violence as a metaphorical instrument to manifest his purposes of reordering and reconstruction. It is by means of the poet's transforming power that the ancient authorized sources of literary power are, like Apollo, rendered mute and their oracles, though not declared false are clearly now the possession of the modern poet.

Du Bellay is showing through his dismemberment of the glorious city and his restructuring of its parts that this authority now resides with the sixteenth century poet. Literary creativity, which the poet needs to "textually reconstruct"¹⁵ the image of the King, necessarily begins with a transgression.¹⁶ In Du Bellay's case, his transgression is the barbaric attack upon the person of Rome :

... his desire to write challenges the ideal, presupposes the necessity of its replacement; his materials will be fragments of its dismembered corpse.¹⁷

The emphasis on the dismembered corpse of Rome establishes itself as a leitmotif throughout the sonnet sequences. The rubble, the ashes are all fragmented body parts which the poet consumes in order to transform Rome's reality into a manipulative commodity. In sonnet 5, we find: "Le corps de Rome en cendre est devallé." In sonnet 7, Du Bellay characterizes Rome as "L' honneur poudreux" and he continues with :

Las peu à peu cendre vous devenez,
.....
Fable du peuple, et publiques rapines!
Oeuvres et noms finablement atterre.
(vv. 7-8, 11)

In sonnets 14 and 15, we find these references to the famous city: "ces poudreux tombeaux, ombres poudreuses, reliques cendreuses." By representing the world in discourse, writers are engaged in constructing the world and accommodating persons, places and things to positions within it.¹⁸ Du Bellay's portrait of Rome becomes a work of deconstruction and fragmentation as the poet repeats the same descriptive terms: "poudreuse cendre, poudreuses reliques, poudreuse

plaine, poudreuses ruines." He asserts his authority in this discourse of Rome by taking the ruined elements and relegating them to positions of dishonor. By rearranging the elements and constructing a world where the king's monuments are abased, Du Bellay is undermining the king's authority while at the same time elevating the poet's authority. The poet becomes the one who determines the fate of the kings' monuments and in this capacity he positions himself to transform the king's image. In sonnet 18, for example, what was earlier referred to as "sacrez costaux" and "ces braves monts" are now called "ces grands monceaux pierreux." Accordingly, we can now see in Du Bellay's discourse of the ancient capital that he interjects the constant theme of solidity versus fragmentation, wholeness versus incompleteness.

Ces grands monceaux pierreux, ces vieux murs que tu vois,
Furent premierement le cloz d'un lieu champestre:
Et ces braves palais, dont le temps s'est fait maistre,
Cassines de pasteurs ont esté quelquefois. (VV 1-4)

The once magnificent walls of Rome are first pictured as an intact structure, "murs," secondly, they are pictured in pieces, "monceaux pierreux," and finally we see them in a humble surrounding: "le cloz d'un lieu champestre." In order to construct a new vision of Rome while at the same time asserting his authority the poet has to de-solidify the hard substances, (in this case the process used is pulverization) and rearrange the elements. In appropriating the kings' monuments and placing them in a different, more humble position, the poet proves his superiority.

The poet also shows his ability to master time with his poetic images. In verse 3 of this sonnet he evokes the past glory of Rome, "ces braves palais..." while at the same time reminding the reader of their present state of decay, "... dont le temps s'est fait maistre." He then immediately returns to the far distant past to the humble beginnings of Rome before these stones were used to construct Roman palaces. In this distant time they were part of the "cassines de pasteurs." Next the author begins once more a forward progression in chronological time :

Lors prindrent les bergers les ornemens des Roys,
Et le dur laboureur de fer aims sa dextre : (vv. 5-6)

In *Les Antiquitez* the reader is presented with images that are not situated and delimited in chronological time. We have just seen how the author uses his authority to move at will from the past to the present to an even further distant past. Reversing the direction, the author, as we have seen, then moves progressively forward. Daniel Russel, in his article "Du Bellay's Emblematic Vision of Rome," feels that Du Bellay is in the process of reconstructing the cultural and historical continuity of Rome which he had not found as a humanist tourist.¹⁹ I would say, however, that Du Bellay's reconstructive undertakings are not primarily efforts to maintain an historical continuity, but efforts to show his ability to manipulate and transform the image of Rome's glory. He has taken the architecture of the king and shown how its solidness and its rigidness eventually works against it with the passage of time. The stone edifices of the king are locked into the past, in a fixed moment in time. These fixed edifices, once erected, cannot move from the past to the present. The process of the erosion by time then begins. When Du Bellay returned to the actual sight of Rome, the glory of these monuments had been erased.

Du Bellay has taken his architecture, the architecture of poetry and shown how, using it, he can move at will through time. He returns to the literary past and, using his poetic language, reconstructs "ces braves palais." As we have seen, his journey takes him even further back to when these stones were first used to construct humble abodes. Du Bellay is showing that his architecture is not locked into a fixed time and place in the historical past. The poet uses the Roman monument to serve as an intermediary point of reference as the reader, by means of poetic imagery, contemplates what was before and what was after this period of greatness. The focus then should be on the value of the monuments constructed with and "enrichy et illustré de motz" (DI 211) which the poet uses to give immortality. The free movement of the poetic image back and forth through time exemplifies its unending existence and Du Bellay adeptly demonstrates the presence and control of the authoritative voice of the poet.

By creating through poetic language a world where the poet is his own authority, Du Bellay is making an allusion to poetic

subjectivity. These are the poet's images. It is within his power to uplift, to abase, to embellish, or to vilify these images. Answerable to no higher authority, the poet uses the language to produce an architectural structure which can be continually visualized, refreshed and renewed. In this way he uses the language as a means of creating a type of perpetuity which is implanted with his ideas and totally governed by him.

In addition to his images not being situated and delimited in chronological time, Du Bellay's images are also not limited to one specific shape or form. The poet, in keeping with the theme of solidity or wholeness versus fragmentation, reserves the right to separate, to co-mingle, to shut-up to release these images in any manner whatsoever, no matter how unwonted. Consider for example sonnet 19 :

Tout le parfait dont le ciel nous honnore,
 Tout l'imparfait qui naist dessous les cieux,
 Tout ce qui paist noz esprits et noz yeux,
 Et tout cela qui noz plaisirs devore :

Tout le malheur qui nostre aage dedore,
 Tout le bon heur des siecles les plus vieux,
 Rome du temps deses premiers ayeux
 Le tenoit clos, ainsi qu'une Pandore.

Mais le Destin, débrouillant ce chaos,
 Où tout le bien et le mal fut enclos,
 A fait depuis que les vertus divines

Volant au ciel ont laissé les pechez,
 Qui jusq'icy se sont tenus cachez
 Sous les monceaux de ces vieilles ruines.

The image of all inclusiveness and completeness is emphasized and reinforced by the repetition of the word "Tout" in verses 1 through 6. The entire sonnet is composed of two sentences and upon the completion of the first sentence, we discover the termination of the image of wholeness and the reintroduction in the sonnet sequences of the image of fragmentation and disruption.

Before considering the controlled disorder that the poet unleashes in the second half of sonnet 19 let us examine the abstract nouns enumerated in the first part of this sonnet. The poet talks in specific terms of : "le parfait, l'imparfait, le malheur" and "le bon heur." He also uses the unspecific expressions : "Tout ce qui paist noz esprits et noz yeux, / Et tout cela qui noz plaisirs devore," as if to include all the grey areas which cannot be categorized under the two opposing poles of perfection/imperfection and good/evil. It is worth noting the grey areas between the abstract oppositions include the human, fleshy, earthbound elements of eating and devouring : "Tout ce qui paist... / ... tout cela qui noz plaisir devore."

Turning our attention to the abstract expressions, we see in-line one that all perfection (verse one) without exception comes from heaven and all imperfections have their origin in the earth (verse 2). The present age, "nostre aage," is presented by the poet as incorporating all that is evil. This is no doubt a subtle reference to the present state of decay of the "eternal" city. Notice in this verse that the poet speaks in terms of the evil that permeates this age, "dedore." If we examine all the sonnets to see what Du Bellay mentions specifically as adorning the city when viewed through the eyes of a sixteenth century visitor, we return once again to the oft repeated "poudreuse cendre" which blankets the "murs, reliques," and "plaines" of Rome. The expression "Tout le malheur" affirms the author's sentiments that visible Rome in its entirety is in a state of disintegration.

At the same time that the whole of Rome is pictured as crumbling under a blanket of decay, Du Bellay presents in the next line a Rome which incorporates within its borders "Tout le bonheur des siecles..." The contradiction and impossibility of an object incorporating two wholes becomes possible only through poetic imagery and limitless poetic authority. The six expressions of wholeness in verses 1 through 6 are all fused into one whole and become a complete expression of the poet's vision of Rome :

Rome du temps de ses premiers ayeux le tenoit clos...
(vv. 7-8)

This vision is continued in the latter half of the sonnet where there is a supernatural separation of the entities of good and evil when

"...les vertus devinces/ volant au ciel ont laissé les pechez./Qui jusqu'icy se sont ténus cachez/Sous les monceaux de ces vieilles ruines." This image allows one to imagine time's consuming power at work. It is because the destructive forces of time have left the city in such a ruined state that no truth or beauty remains enclosed in its walls. The deteriorating corps is no longer a suitable dwelling place for the works of immortality. Stone edifices therefore, as Du Bellay wishes the reader to conclude, are not suitable guardians for the king's glory. The expressions of wholeness as presented in the first six verses are destroyed and reduced to rubble. There can be no hope of glory "Sous les monceaux de ces vieilles ruines" without the reconstructive efforts of the poet.

A further significant feature of this sonnet is that Du Bellay uses several expressions to reintroduce his ideas concerning the importance of the temporality that the poet inscribes in his images. References to the beginning of man's time and to the beginning of sorrows can be found in this sonnet. "Tout l'imparfait qui naist" and "...ainsi qu'une Pandre" is a mythological reference which also marks this beginning. An allusion to eternal time and perfection can be found in the reference to "Tout le parfait dont le ciel nous honnore." It is worth noting that perfection is linked to eternal time (v.1) and imperfection is linked to mortality. (v.2) This same idea is expressed in the concluding tercets where we find "...les vertus divines/ Volant au ciel ..." (vv. 11-12) and "... les pechez/ ...se sont ténus cachez/ Sous les monceaux de ces vieilles ruines." Hence, Du Bellay's poetic language links the objects which are inscribed with perfection to "le ciel" and the objects which are perishing to "*dessous* le ciel or "*sous*...ces vieilles ruines. Notice that "les vertus divines" defy time by escaping, "volant au ciel," whereas "les pechez" become the victim or captive of time: "se sont ténus cachez/ sous les monceaux de ces vieilles ruines."

Turning to other references to time in sonnet 19, we find "le malheur" (v. 5), the bad time and "le bon heur", the good time. (v. 6) Both of these "times" which Rome endures have fixed limits : "nostre aage", "des siècles". The "Rome du temps ..." described in the second quatrain by these expressions is situated and delimited in chronological time and therefore, the king's monument to his glory,

Rome, fails in relation to time. "Ces vieilles ruines" represent all that remains of the "Rome du temps". We see that in the next to the last tercet "le bien" and "le mal" are both intermingled : "... ce Chaos, / où tout le *bien* et le *mal* fut enclos." The poet's efforts consequently are efforts to inscribe in the image of Rome a temporal dimension, removing "le mal" which is linked to mortality and enhancing "le bien" which is linked to the eternal; thereby transforming "le malheur" (malheur) into "bonheur" (bonheur).

The opposing poles of "le bien" et "le mal", "good" architecture and "bad" architecture, as we have seen evidenced throughout *Les Antiquitez*, serves several purposes. First of all, this dialectic serves as a method by which Du Bellay can highlight and contrast the differences between monuments of stone and the poetical monuments of the writer. Du Bellay uses it to show the disadvantages of solid objects made of rigid, inflexible substances and the advantages of poetic language which is flexible and fluid and the appropriateness or in-appropriateness of one or the other when used to glorify the king. Secondly, this dialectic serves as a convenient vehicle for continual praise of the poet throughout the poem as his poetic constructions are repeatedly shown in sonnet after sonnet to be superior to the kings' undertakings. In addition this dialectic puts on display the ability of the poet to use his poetic imagery to convert into his own substance the solid, rigid, ruined edifices of failed attempts by others to obtain immortality. Specifically, the dialectic of *Les Antiquitez* highlight the poet's conversion of the solid into the fluid and flexible as he uses the fragments of the city to make a literary construction which can at the poet's whim bring honor or dishonor.

In the sonnet sequences Du Bellay has shown how he can take the fragments of ruined edifices, transform them into manipulative literary building blocks and rebuild Rome. Implicit in this demonstration is that writing can be used to fashion the king's immortality through the constant reordering and restructuring of language fragments. The poet's ability to inscribe temporality into the image of the king, thus building a monument which will constantly be reformed and reinscribed in time and which will last throughout history, affirms, the poet's superiority. Consequently, the poet's superior

position as redefined by Du Bellay in *Les Antiquitez* becomes unassailable.

NOTES

1. Ingrid Daemmrich, "The Function of the Ruins Motif in Du Bellay's 'Les Antiquitez de Rome' " *Neophilologus* 59 (1975) : 16.
2. Dorothy Coleman, *The Chaste Muse* (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1980) 91.
3. Alfred Satterthwaith, *Spenser, Ronsard and Du Bellay. A Renaissance Comparison* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1960) 93.
4. Thomas M. Green, "Resurrecting Rome : The Double Task of the Humanist Imagination : " Papers of the 13th Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, Paul A. Ramsey, Ed., *Rome in the Renaissance, the City and the Myth* Binghamton XVIII (1982), 41, 44.
5. Joachim Du Bellay, *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*, (Genève : Slatine Reprints, 1969) 132. All subsequent references to *La Deffence* will be taken from this edition and will be noted in the text by the abbreviation DI and the number(s) of the corresponding pages (s).
6. Louis Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text," *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts* Patricia Parker and David Quint, ed., (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 322.
7. All quotations from the *Antiquitez* are drawn from Albert-Marie Schmidt, ed., *Poètes du seizième siècle* (Paris : Librairie Gallimard, 1953) 418-437.
8. Françoise Joukovsky, *La Gloire dans la poésie française et néolatine du XVIe siècle* (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1969) 233.
9. Joukovsky 233.
10. This term is based on Montrose's remarks that the poet "reconstructs the monarch as a textual product. Montrose 322. Not only can persons be "textually reconstructed," but places and ideas also.
11. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982) : 786.
12. "Accabler," *Petit Robert*, 1985.

13. Margaret Ferguson, "The Exile's Defense : Du Bellay's 'La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse,' *PMLA* 93 (1978) ; 277.
14. Ferguson 277, 278 note 10.
15. See note 10.
16. Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford : Claredon Press, 1979) 179.
18. Montrose 306.
19. Daniel Russell, "Du Bellay's Emblematic Vision of Rome," *Yale French Studies XLVII* (1972), 109.

CHANGING PATTERNS IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE PEDAGOGY IN INDIA

Debalina Sen Sucharita Chakraborty

What kind of comparative literature is Comparative Indian Literature? Is it merely a branch of world comparative literature, or does it have a rationale of its own? Which variety is it, the French, American or Russian, or is it a new variety altogether? Does it have a historical or an aesthetic bias, or both? These are some of the questions that inevitably arise when Indian comparatists are advancing a concept of Comparative Indian Literature. Over the years, through various publications on Comparative Literature in India, comparatists have tried to arrive at an exact theoretical reference for Comparative Indian Literature. Here we try to give a brief introduction to some of the Indian publications on Comparative Literature.

Nagendra (ed.), *Comparative Literature*.
Delhi : Delhi University, 1977.

Nagendra's book on Comparative Literature is significant as far as the history of Comparative Literature in India is concerned. As stated in the Editor's note, this book makes an attempt to discuss almost all the relevant aspects of Comparative Literature in the Indian context. The book was published at a time when the significance of Comparative Literature was being duly acknowledged in India and efforts were being made in and outside universities to underline its importance and define its scope, and also to give it due recognition at higher levels of education. Nagendra underlines the need to develop a broad-based Indian concept of literature, or a concept of Indian Literature as a whole, in the multi-lingual situation of India.

Most of the articles compiled here were read in a Seminar organised by the extension Service of Delhi University in October 1976. The financial assistance for this Seminar was provided by the UGC. Significantly, the first UGC Committee on Comparative

Literature was chaired by Professor Nagendra and Professor Naresh Guha. Professor Guha's views on Comparative Literature also appear in this collection.

In his essay "Comparative Literature : Meaning and Scope" Nagendra adopts an universalistic view of Comparative Literature, for he feels that Comparative Literature is a concept of literature taken as a whole - as an undivided entity. It is a view of universal literature independent of linguistic, national or racial demarcations. Its content is human experience in its essential form and its medium is imaginative language, belonging to any age, race or country. Nagendra does admit that such a concept of Comparative Literature has not gone unchallenged, on aesthetic and philosophical grounds. However, Nagendra tries to refute such charges, including allegations that Comparative Literature directly and indirectly rejects history, and that Comparative Literature denationalizes the concept of literature.

In his essay "The Method of Comparative Literature in India : A Point of View", Naresh Guha underlines the fact that the method of Comparative Literature cannot be substantially different in India, and yet, the immediate aims of the Indian Comparatist cannot be exactly similar to the aims of contemporary Western comparatists. The Indian situation demands appropriate adaptations of the Comparative Literature methodology. Guha himself voices one of the immediate concerns of the Indian comparatist, namely, that the frontiers of Comparative Literature should be urgently extended to include literatures of the East since the Western Comparatists by and large have left the area untouched. The extension is needed all the more because Guha feels that we would be concerned with the understanding of our own literatures, which are more accessible to us than anything else. We should start from our own and only then branch into other relevant literatures, not to satisfy any parochial ambitions, but only to correct local or provincial sentiments. However, at no stage does Guha undermine the importance of Western literature in any scheme of Comparative Indian Literature. As Guha had already stated in another essay, "Comparative Literature : meaning and Scope", any idea of a possible framework of Comparative Literature curriculum suitable for India must include the hard core of Comparative Literature studies

in the West and knowledge of established western norms, as modern literary standards have been shaped by Western efforts.

There are papers in this compilation where the authors have expressed their doubts and reservations about Comparative Literature in general and Comparative Indian Literature in particular. Yet, this publication edited by Nagendra remains a pioneering work, since by addressing these very doubts, the contributors have tried to work out a basis of Indian Comparative Literature, its theory and methodology.

Amiya Dev, *The Idea of Comparative Literature in India*.
Calcutta : Papyrus, 1984.

Amiya Dev's book begins with a discussion on 'Literary History and Comparative Literature', where he brings up a methodological question. He feels that a more urgent question related to the structuration of Indian literary history is how instances like Madhusudan borrowing from Ovid, Vidyasagar from Kalidasa, and later Sudhindranath Datta or Buddhadev Bose following Mallarmean aesthetic principles or adapting Greek myths, or more recent instances related to modern Indian Literatures be dealt with in the purview of the history of Bengali literature of past 125 years. So there could be two ways of doing Comparative Literature in India, the first would include the study of interrelations and analogies between different Indian Literatures, and secondly by conceiving structures in the histories of single Indian Literatures.

In the second and third essays of this book, Dev makes a distinction between Comparative Indian Literature and Comparative Literature in a multilingual situation, the latter is Comparative Literature in a diverse world of many languages. Therefore Comparative Indian Literature must have a rationale of its own. Our interrelations are different from the interrelations like "Goethe en France" or "Byron and Pushkin". So Indian Comparative Literature cannot be done fully by means of ordinary influence/impact/effect methodology. Within the general framework we have to fit in a number of detailed frames.

In a third world situation, a systematic charting of psychological, sociological and anthropological contexts of texts would produce a

particular history of literature but not literary history. Literary history is concerned with deeper causalities, it tries to probe deeper into the reasons especially political, behind each fact in history of literature.

While discussing Comparative Western Literature, Dev feels that neither English nor any other Western Literature can be studied in a purely single literary way. So he asks for the sanction of a better pedagogy in the study of English Literature. He suggests a reframing of English syllabus on more scientific lines. He argues in the next chapter titled 'The Relevance of Comparative Literature to the English Studies in India', that English Studies by its very nature claim some Comparative Literature.

But in doing historical and aesthetic comparisons, we have to depend heavily on translations. The question arises, about the validity of the method pedagogically. Dev argues, "A literary text is not just a phonetic system but is also a semantic system". It may not be possible to approximate the sounds of a text in another language. But since meanings are not embedded in sounds, it may not be impossible to approximate the meanings of a text in another language."

In "How to do Comparative Indian Literature", Dev explains that Comparative Indian Literature can be done in two ways, in a monoliterary way, and in multiliterary way. The first is the influence/impact/effect method traced in terms of an individual author's relation to the author or work of an alien literature. The multiliterary way includes methods like genological, thematological, historiographic, and relations both interliterary and alien.

Dev attempts the formulation of a Comparative Indian Literature syllabus in the next essay, both in the monoliterary and multiliterary ways.

In the last paper called "The Idea of Comparative Literature in India", Dev clarifies that the idea of Comparative Literature in India should be "bipartite"—that is, the ideas of both Comparative Indian Literature and Comparative Western Literature should coexist, and this is to be kept in mind while formulating a syllabus. He suggests the methodology that could be adopted in such studies, however, leaving out areas such as literature and other arts and literature and ideas.

Nabanecta Dev Sen, *Counterpoints : Essays in Comparative Literature*. Calcutta : Prajna, 1985.

Dev Sen's book, according to the author, does not define the area of Comparative Literature, but illustrates its nature and its function through six essays. These essays are intended to demonstrate what Comparative Literature is, what it does and how.

The introductory essay "The Concept of an Indian Literature Today" recommends Comparative Literature as indispensable for studying Indian literature in its classical colonial and multilingual framework. For in India literature is placed in the complex context of a multi-cultural and multi-racial socio-historical melange, where without conducting proper reception and influence studies, both international and intra-national, one cannot get an insight into the reality of the human situation. Dev Sen also emphasises the need for an inter-disciplinary approach in any serious attempt to establish a concept of Indian literature today. What does "today" mean in India? The author answers that it is an incredible timespan, including the ancient, medieval and ultra-modern, within which the modern Indian consciousness works. And it is through this modern Indian psyche, vacillating between tradition and modernity, that one may acquire a key to a pan-Indian literary idiom.

The essay "The 'foreign Reincarnation' of Rabindranath Tagore" studies the quality of Tagore's translations of his poetry, as well as his selection of themes for translation, in order to explain the poet's decline as a serious literary personality in the Western world. The intricate problems of translation comprise one of the major concerns of Comparative Literature and this essay is a translation study, treating in details the difficulties of rendering Indian poetry into English, and the problems created by poor translations.

In the last-named essay, Dev Sen comments that it was unfortunate, but it certainly was no accident that Tagore found himself catering to a rare mystic taste in the Western mind. The next essay in this collection, entitled "An Aspect of Tagore-Criticism in the West : The Cloud of Mysticism" takes up this "mystic" approach to Tagore's "oriental thought". Though there have been occasional voices warning

the general reader against the danger of mystification and spiritualization of everything that came from Tagore, the general critical response was that this Eastern mystic would fulfill what was lacking in the Western intellectual atmosphere of the time. This essay thus becomes an example of a reception study, showing how the proper interpretation of an eastern literary work may be hampered in the Western cultural context due to extra-literary reasons like the faulty manner of presentation or the preconceived notions at the receiving end.

"Two cases of Conscience and Alienation" is a thematic study comparing the treatment of the theme of the doctor as an outsider by Albert Camus and Manik Bandyopadhyay. The next essay "Thematic Structure of Epic Poems in the East and in the West" deals with the epic as a genre and analyzes the basic thematic structure of oral epic poetry, taking more than a dozen Eastern and Western epics into account. In the last essay of this collection, namely "The Modish Traditionalizer : A Case Study", the author takes up the instance of Kamal Kumar Majumdar, a Bengali writer who destroyed the existing form of the Bengali language in order to go back to the pure springs of the language. Dev Sen does view Kamal Kumar Majumdar's literary style as a protest against the anglophilia of urban middle class, but simultaneously detects the values of a western-educated feudal Hindu elitist in his language.

Thus, Dev Sen's *Counterpoints* offers practical illustrations of what Comparative Literature actually is. Though as the author admits, the book limits itself to the East-West focus, its ultimate aim is to see that the methodology of Comparative Literature be the rationale for all future studies of Indian literature.

Swapan Majumdar, *Comparative Literature, Indian Dimensions*. Calcutta : Papyrus, 1987.

With such a statement as, "In Europe adherence to a comparative approach was but a matter of choice, in India it was a must, a necessity because of its multilingual state of confederacy", Swapan Majumdar gives us an insight into the historical situation of India that itself calls for comparative approach in the study of art, literature, philosophy

or religion. In the first chapter of the book that goes by its title, while pondering over the question whether Indian Literature is singular or pluralistic, the author concludes, it is not possible to overlook the distinctions that characterise regional literatures, and therefore the Indian comparatists approach has to be horizontal rather than vertical, be that thematic, genetic or formalistic. Though the unequal development of the regional literatures stand in the way of periodization of literary history, even then, as Majumdar states, "in the Indian literary context, because of its unique pull and simultaneity of traditions, it folds every vibration of change as well, the historicism and the relativism both with regard to its pastness as well as to the otherness of tradition a text may belong to, operate concurrently". "Confluences and interactions, migrations and rehabilitations, impacts and residuals are often to be found in them from its early years". The situation therefore demands that literatures in India be studied keeping correspondences rather than in isolation. He discusses this in the essay called "Periodization of Indian Literature" while trying to find a rationale for periodization in Indian literary historiography. It is his suggestion that the chronological chart should project the growth of each language-based literature, and at the same time make one aware of the composite character of Indianness. Thus arises another problem, that of 'aperture' in Indian literary historiography. Both the author and the text must be studied from the axis of regional literature as well as Indian literary tradition, but determining the horizontal and the vertical axis poses a problem. According to Majumdar, the appropriate structuration would be to put Indian literature along vertical axis. He lays out a structuration that according to him is valid and pragmatic, viz.

1. Literature of Royal patronage : Literature of Court;
2. Literature of Religious patronage : Literature of the Templeyard;
3. Patronage of the Reading Public : Literature in Print;
4. Patronage of the Entrepreneur : Literature for the Media.

Even adivasi and folk literature could be brought under these heads. But the formulation of such a literary history would require the expertise of inter-disciplinary scholars.

In the essay called "Indian-Western literary relations problems of acculturation and appreciation, Majumdar points out that the regional literatures in India which should be given the status of "sub-national literatures", can be regarded as separate National Literatures in their own right but they are part of a bigger "polysystem". The words "nation" and "national", with their political implications cannot be applied here. Indian literary history is different from Western literary history and requires a new system of periodization and also a new approach to literary criticism. We may quote the author, "ours is a move, then, from text to tradition, from criticism to methodology, from pattern to structure, from experience to systems. And Indian Literature provides us with inexhaustible combinations of such systems".

In the essay where he discusses problems of paradigms and parameters, he refers to the Sanskrit aestheticians and the classical Indian literary criticism which has a significant contribution to Reader-Response theory, and could well set the paradigm comprehensive enough to assess especially Third World Literatures.

In the next essay called "Cultural Relativism in a Colonial Context", Majumdar refers to at least three influences originating from outside, that have contributed to the Indian literary experience, viz. the Aryan, the Islamic, and the Western, on the one hand, and a number of diversifications originating from within, that expose before us a "panorama of various facets of Cultural Relativism in its literary matrices".

While discussing "Influence Aesthetics in a Colonial Context", Majumdar asks for the appropriate application of the terms and concepts like Influence and Imitation, the semantic field of which should correspond to the times, and he proposes certain modalities which would enhance combinations of Author/Text/Canon/Code/Convention, and their "asymptotic" and "variable" relationship with time.

In "Influence Aesthetics in a Colonial Context", he points out how a colonial situation sets a limitation to the choice of a receiver. He examines how reception aesthetics operates on two planes at the same time, i.e. between two or more national polysystems without or the multiple sub-systems within, which results in double standards in a colony.

Chandra Mohan (ed.), *Aspects of Comparative Literature, Current Approaches*. New Delhi: India Publishers and Distributors, 1989.

This book edited by Chandra Mohan includes several essays that bring up important issues related to both comparative literary studies in India and elsewhere. The essays included have been arranged under the topics like Trends and Approaches, Thematology and Literary Criticism, Tradition and Modernity, Analysis and Interpretation.

The introductory section which includes the essay called "Comparative Literature in India: A Historical Perspective," traces the facts related to the development of Comparative Literature as a discipline in India. Here Sisir Kumar Das points out that long before Comparative Literature evolved as a formal discipline, Indian scholars realised that a literature cannot be studied in isolation, that one has to look beyond its language and literary tradition. There are instances where Prakrits have been used in dialogues in various classical Sanskrit plays. Contacts between languages belonging to different families have also been obtained. Hybridization of language was a notable feature especially in the medieval period. These were experiments in style that crossed the linguistic boundaries of any specific literature. Another example could be Urdu which emerged out of Persian influence on Khariboli. Das attempts to study the various junctures in the development of literary studies in India.

Amiya Dev begins his article named "Towards Comparative Indian Literature", by questioning the nomenclature Comparative Indian Literature itself or the very coinage of the term Indian Literature. He puts forth the problem in this manner—if Indian Literature is an aggregate of all literatures of India, there would be no distinction between "Indian Literature", and "Indian Literatures". According to him there are only Indian Literatures and Comparative Literature is the only method of working out a pedagogy of Indian literature. Thus emerges the concept Comparative Indian Literature.

Dev then works out several reasons that justify the method, like (1) the country is multilingual which lends it a multiliterariness, (2) the country belongs to the third world, (3) apart from the actual interrelations, the Indian situation is characterised by a true "Sensus

Communis,” emerging out of cultural and historical bonds between the different regions. Dev tries to explain this in terms of an “extra tinge” that a literature wears in our country, i.e. Bengali as Bengali plus, or Punjabi as Punjabi plus, (in Europe French is French, German is German). In our case comparison arises out of the situation itself.

Apart from multilingualism, there is a potential bilingualism (e.g. Hindi-Urdu relationship) which also calls for a methodology different from conventional western tools of comparison which proves to be inadequate in an Indian or Third World situation.

In the Third World where politics play a major part, “influence”/ “imitation” and “reception”/“survival” take different dimensions. As Dev says, “our literary history since colonization is held in the dialectic of dependence on English literature and independence from it”. While discussing the pedagogical aspects of Comparative Indian Literature, Dev traces the new orientations in the field of historiography, relations, genology and thematology. Indian literary historiography would be relatively simpler than a Western one because of a common social and political history that bind all differences. Dev suggests the assembling of the diachronies and synchronies along three coordinates like literatures along one, dates along another, and “Zeitgeist” along another.

The study of interrelations between the various Indian literatures can be quite comprehensive. The Literatures have not only influenced one another but have transmitted western influence to one another through translations.

There is a problem of method in case of genology and Dev professes a way out, “We can begin with generic universals and look them up in the literatures. And the data are expected to be quite rich for we have had several sources for these universals—traditional (Sanskrit-Pali-Prakrit-Dravidian), medieval (indigenous and Perso-Arabic) and western.” But in order to be inclusive in our method we should begin from below.

A similar method can be adopted in Indian thematology. Beginning with thematic universals one may come from “above” or go from “below”, or begin with thematic particulars collected from the literatures and then juxtapose them. We may conclude from the above reflections

that Comparative Indian Literature is valid Comparative Literature and a valid pedagogy. As the author says in this essay, "A pedagogy presupposes a sound theory and an equally sound method. Comparative Literature has both."

Chandra Mohan echoes Dev's suggestion of working out a methodology depending on the closeness of two or more languages. One should work out language clusters like Bengali—Hindi, Bengali—Assamese instead of approaching all simultaneously. Chandra Mohan proposes that comparative approach to Indian Literatures be of "intracultural" type rather than "intercultural". While discussing the recent trends in Comparative Indian Literature, he points out the interaction between Indian English writing and Indian language literatures. There is an involvement among the teachers of English and Indian writers and critics writing in English. There is also a creative relation between Indo-English Literature and the Indian language literatures. Another element in the growing Indian writing in English, is the place of English translations of various literary works from Indian languages. All these should be treated as components of Comparative Indian Literature.

We may quote K. Chellappan from his article called "Thematology in Comparative Indian Literature : Matter and Method" : "Comparative Indian Literature if undertaken systematically, would take us to the core of the Indian experience in its different manifestations... we could see the core of Indian Literature as a meta-language or "ur-literature" underlying different literatures". He calls for a "rigorous method" of studying and comparing themes and motifs for the diversity must be realized and not lost in perception of unity.

As stated by Chandra Mohan in the introduction, this book intends to give an impression of current Indian Comparative interests. Besides the articles mentioned above, there are several other essays included in the book, a major section of which namely, D. Prem pati's "Criticism and Literary Taste in the 19th Century India", "Towards Modernity : The Hindi and Urdu Short Story" by Sukrita P. Kumar, Indranath Choudhuri's essay Titled, "The Change in Society and the Problem of Aesthetic Value in Modern Hindi and Bengali Drama", O. P. Juneja's "Domesticated English : The Language of African and

Indian Fiction", Harish Trivedi's "The Urdu Premchand : The Hindi Premchand", Satendra Singh's "The Urban Experience : The Indian Novel," and Jayanti Chattopadhyay's article "Women and the Early Indian Novel", — deal with inner-Indian problems, the scope of doing Comparative Literature in India and delineate some practical instances of how comparatist themes in Indian literature could be dealt with. The essays like D. W. Fokkema's "Towards a Methodology in Intercultural Studies", and Andre Lefevere's "Beyond Interpretation or the Business of Rewriting", address certain aspects of contemporary literary theory in relation to Comparative Studies in general, like the role of "Cultural relativism" in comparative literature in the former, and issues like reader - response, interpretation, assessment, translation and others in the latter. Four other articles listed within the first section titled "Trends and approaches" discuss recent trends in comparative literary scene in the West, Canada, Soviet Union and Africa. Two other essays like G. N. Devy's 'The Commonwealth "Period" and Comparative Literature' and Swapan Majumdar's 'The "Otherness" of literature : Tensions in Critical Positions in a Colonial Situation,' interpret the concept of Comparative Literature in the colonial context. Swapan Majumdar proposes a distinction between 'contact' and 'encounter'. The former is the case where cultures meet and a relationship grows up under normal circumstances, and the latter is the case when relationships are necessarily forced upon two cultures due to historical reasons.

Amiya Dev and Sisir Kumar Das (eds.), *Comparative Literature : Theory and Practice*. Shimla : Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989.

This book edited by Dev and Das is a collection of essays on the theory and practice of Comparative Literature which grew out of a seminar held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla in June, 1987 on "Comparative Literature : Theory and Practice". The scholars, whose papers comprise this collection, are either professional comparatists or single-literature experts, who share a conviction that through comparative literature alone can Indian literary pedagogy be

modernized. And to fulfil such an objective, it emerges that India must develop her own approach to Comparative Literature, though not in isolation from its developments elsewhere. The contributors to this volume emphasize the need for an epistemology and an identification of the various orientations of Comparative Literature in India. And there is also the need for redefining areas such as interliterariness, reception, themes and genres, literary movements, literary history, translation, aesthetics and literary theory, in terms appropriate to the Indian situation. These areas are approached in this book both conceptually and as case studies.

The first section of this book deals with the broad "why" and "what" of Comparative Literature, its orientations and schools. Initiating the seminar with the inaugural essay "Muses in Isolation", Sisir Kumar Das argues for a new orientation in the teaching of literature which is relevant to the immediate social needs of the people as well as a reflection of our increasing awareness of the power and value of literatures of other cultures. Das feels that Comparative Literature, which is not different from the study of single literatures so far as the critical methodology is concerned, but differs only in matter and attitude, can play a vital role in the reorganization of our literature faculties. Das argues on behalf of Comparative Literature, which is basically a study of literatures in relation to one another, as an alternative to all kinds of exclusiveness that characterize the existing literature departments in India. To counter the charge of inadequacy of literary study through translation, Das suggests a three-tier division. The corpus of literary study will have a hard core, comprising of the mother-tongue literature or national literature, but it must accommodate the literatures of other cultures, a part of which can be read in the languages they are written in depending upon the student's capability, and a part in translation.

- The following three essays in this compilation deal with different "schools" of Comparative Literature. The editors have stated in their editorial note that they have consistently focused on the Indian situation and on the relevance of Comparative Literature to India. Subha Dasgupta's "The French School of Comparative Literature", Chandra Mohan's "Comparative Literature : the Canadian Debate" and Yue

Daiyun's "Prospects of Chinese Comparative Literature" provide a larger perspective on Comparative Literature in totally different cultural areas, and help one to chart out ways, as Dasgupta puts it "to realize the plurality of literature and the plurality of the extra-literary wholes into which literature inscribes itself".

The remaining essays in the first section, such as Nirmala Jain's "Comparative Literature : The Indian Context" and Sisir Kumar Das's "Why Comparative Indian Literature?" reiterate the need to consider the historical situation in which we are placed, so as to arrive at an idea of Comparative Indian Literature. Das cites Amiya Dev who has identified India's multi-lingualism and Third World situation as reasons for Comparative Indian Literature. Consequently, categories such as "influence", "imitation", "reception" and "survival" need modifications to suit the Third World literary situation.

The second section of the book is devoted to what is still considered the primary rationale of Comparative Literature, interliterariness or literary relations. In "The Bonds and Bounds of a Literary Tradition", Lachman M. Khubchandani selects two parameters, namely language and culture, while discussing certain methodological issues of delineating the boundaries and identifying the "binding core" of a literary tradition. Khubchandani locates the bonds in India's pluricultural ethos in a shared tradition and a pan-Indian sensibility. But he also raises the question of the degree of inter-translatability across languages and cultural heritages. While on the subject of the boundaries of a language in creative writing, the author asks whether the frontiers of a literary tradition be demarcated according to the "verbal language", that is the linguistic structure, or on the basis of the "visionary language" comprised of the patterns of sensitivity conveyed through symbolism.

In his essay "Intertextuality and Influence : Connections and Boundaries", Jaidev reflects on the connections, common zones and boundaries between intertextuality and influence. Jaidev's view is that in contrast to influence, which largely discounts individual volition and will, intertextuality suggests a wholly self-conscious and consciously managed activity. He speaks of that literary awareness which makes an author, the ephebe, enter into a dialectical relationship with the

'influence', so as to interpret it, and subsequently direct such awareness toward intertextuality.

Bhalchandra Nemade's essay is an influence study in a colonial context. Nemade speaks of "Contact comparative linguistics", where one concentrates on the confrontation of two linguistic systems, say that of English and any Indian language, and this leads to a study of the confrontations of other superstructures like the stylistic systems, aesthetic systems and cultural and historical traditions of the two cultures, which are linked to the linguistic features. The linguistic model can thus be used as a fundamental framework for the study of literary influence.

Swapan Majumdar also discusses the issue of influence studies in a colonial context, and he proposes certain modalities of demarcating "imitation" from "influence" and influence studies from reception studies. He provides concrete examples from Indian literature to show how Indian literary history provides ample scope for scholarly application of almost all the methodologies of influence studies. However, Majumdar expresses the view that for a comprehensive study of the present era of Indian literature, the methodology of reception studies would be more effective than that of influence studies, as variegated responses are of more consequence to the Indian situation than interpretation of the sources.

The third section of this volume takes up mainly a few concrete cases of reception, themes, genres and movements. In the essay "The Indian Cultural Factor in the Development of Chinese Fiction", Tan Chung speaks of the Chinese reception to a Buddhist cultural wave that originated from India. The popularization of Buddhist literature led to a development among Chinese writers, of a kind of "fiction temperament" which was conducive to the growth of a new genre. Shyama Prasad Ganguly's "The Hispanic Response to Tagore" is another example of reception study, which reflects upon some of the historical factors leading to a continuity of Tagore reception in Spain.

The subject of thematic studies is taken up by Amiya Dev in his essay "Literary Themes and Comparative Literature". Are thematic studies valid literary studies, or are they, as some would say, a mere

tabulation or accountancy of extraneous given, thus shunting literature towards folklore or mythology? After addressing this question, Dev turns to the necessary interliterariness of thematic studies. Taking illustrations mainly from Indian literature, Dev shows that the neologism "thematology" is a legitimate domain of Comparative Literature.

In his essay, Bholabai Patel adopts an intranational perspective to study an "international" literary movement, namely Modernism, as manifest in Bengali and Gujarati literature.

If the third section of this volume highlights aspects of the practice of Comparative Literature, the fourth and final section comes to Comparative literary theory. In his essay, "Comparative Literary Theory : An Indian Perspective", K. Chellappan emphasizes the need for juxtaposing literatures of diverse cultures in order to arrive at a more inclusive literary theory, taking into consideration plural historical perspectives. Chellappan calls for the need to recognize theories developed independently of Western paradigms. In his paper, he proposes to see the similarities and differences in a few basic concepts and categories of literature, Indian and Western, with special reference to Tolkappiyar, Bharata and Aristotle. And Chellappan states that as no critical concepts are completely culture—bound, Bharata and Tolkappiyar reveal new depths in Western writers, just as Aristotle can reveal new dimensions in our analysis of Indian literature.

The final section also takes up the issues of translation and literary historiography. In his paper "A Reflection on the Translatability of Poetry and The Odyssey of a Song", Pabitra Kumar Roy considers some of the epistemological and ontological issues that seem to arise from the case of a set of translations of a song by Tagore.

In the concluding essay of this volume, "Literary History from Below", Amiya Dev says that he is not working out any literary history as such, but merely raising the question of its science. Historiography is a science and is thus universally applicable. But in India, we are largely engaged in fitting a historiography to a mass of material for which it was not in the first place designed. Instead of importing blanket categories such as literary Renaissance or Modernism, and instead of moving from epistemology to material, Dev calls for literary history from "below". By literary history from below, Dev implies

a centripetal historiography where the emphasis is not on the neatness of the design, but on the inclusiveness of the material.

Indra Nath Choudhuri, *Comparative Indian Literature: Some Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1992.

Choudhuri's book is a collection of twenty two essays offering a perspective on diverse aspects of Comparative Indian Literature. The essays are written on a wide range of literary subjects, and the author hopes that they will bring out the essentials of Indian literature as a whole, while displaying an underlying unity of approach. The essays may be divided into a few well-defined clusters, essays on the theory and methodology of Comparative literature, on interdisciplinary research and literacy; essays examining the 'Indianness' of Indian literature, essays on Indian narratology, and cultural relativism, essays analysing the relation processes of continuity and change, post-modernism and search for roots, role of translation in developing the concept of Indian literature as one literature, and essays on current trends and future directions of modern Indian literature.

Discussing the question of Comparative Literature methodology in the first chapter Choudhuri cites three interrelated approaches—historical, formalistic and socio-realistic, which blend together to point out two fundamental laws which determine the nature of Comparative Literature. These two principles are: International Contextualism and Comparative Criticism. He states that howsoever we may try, the impact of Western literature and thought on our modern literature is so stupendous that crossing the national frontiers or International Contextualism is inevitable for a study of Comparative Indian Literature.

As far as the other fundamental law is concerned, namely "Comparative Criticism", Choudhuri feels that Comparative Literature is necessarily a field of study in comparison having an inter-language perspective. The overall intent, emphasis and execution of Comparative Literature study is comparative, and comparison is here used to indicate affinity, tradition or influence. Some may feel that such a study of rapprochement or tradition and influence belongs not to criticism, but

rather to the "categorising spirit of literary history". But since history cannot be isolated from criticism, the act of indicating affinity or influence becomes a critical act.

Thus international contextualism in literary history and comparative criticism are the laws, which determine the overall plan or method for the proper understanding of Comparative Literature, which according to Choudhuri has now taken shape into a five-dimensional discipline. These dimensions are :

- i) The Study of influence or affinity or tradition/convention of literary works in relation to each other and other forms of human expression.
- ii) Studies of movements and trends;
- iii) Formalistic study of literary works;
- iv) Study of themes and motifs;
- v) Study of theory-oriented poetics and text-oriented criticism.

In influence studies, the comparative method does not consist only in the tracing of sources and models. It is also concerned with how the receiving author reshapes his source model in accordance with his own artistic intentions. Influence study, Choudhuri states, is likely to continue for as long as we go on believing that a historical sense is important to the critical moment, and that the present is intelligible only if conceived of as the product of processes which reach back to the past. However, this diachronic point of view does not make one insensitive to the creative process of either of the artists involved because in Comparative Literature, influence studies are not only historical in dimension but collective in emphasis, where the distinctive style of the period is also taken into account.

Choudhuri speaks of "contemplation" on analogies and resemblances, where the approach for relational studies is "deutero creative", because here the critic successfully persuades us that the supreme critical act is not evaluation but recognition. As an extension of influence studies, the author refers to the study of the interaction between literature and other arts, of the influence of other disciplines

on literature, and vice versa. Choudhuri characterises this methodology as an area of "relational dialectics" based on international contextualism.

Choudhuri also states that certain questions of literary theory, the theory of translation, literary evaluation and several problems of literary sociology can be answered only by a method of comparative criticism. Indian comparatists are making an effort to form their own "metalanguage", for a proper aesthetic and critical assessment of Comparative Indian Literature. For, like other Indian comparatists, Choudhuri too feels that evaluation with the help of a metalanguage, developed by accommodating Sanskrit with Western poetics, and having an interdisciplinary approach is what is needed for Comparative Indian Literature.

Choudhuri devotes a chapter to the role of translation in Comparative Literature. While reiterating the necessity of translation for comparative literary studies, he also points out how compariticism can immensely help translation studies. Choudhuri states that the comparative study of two referential systems, namely the particular linguistic and cultural systems of the writer and the translator, helps us understand the translated version of a literary text with reference to the translator's reading strategies, degree of objectivation, the extent to which the general is modified or replaced by the specific and the type of bilingualism. In fact, in the process of analysing translation, comparative criticism brings close analysis of language to bear on cross-cultural literary questions in a way central to Comparative Literature. While on the subject of cross-cultural communication in translation, Choudhuri speaks of a "dynamic equivalence". He opines that any discourse in the source language and its translation in a target language should be accepted as two sets of possible worlds having a "dynamic equivalence". The question of equivalence is related to meaning, and it is always necessary to aim at the equivalence of pragmatic meaning, if necessary at the expense of semantic equivalence.

Choudhuri's essay 'Cultural Relativism and the Reception of Indian Literature' is also devoted to the question of how to make cross-cultural communication feasible. The early 20th century had seen reception of Indian literature in the West being conditioned by Orientalist constructs. The study of cultural relativism has broadened

the vision of present-day scholars, and they are making efforts to counter the accusation of modernist or eurocentric prepossessions. But the common reader still reads very little of Indian Literature. Choudhuri points out that in the West-Indian Literature is generally taken to be Indian English Literature, which is only a minute fraction of the total literary output, but the West hardly knows it. The reason partly is lack of access to Indian literature. Literature in different Indian languages is not available to the West in translation, and also no consistent effort has been made to promote Indian literature in translation.

The second cluster of essays in this collection offers a perspective on comparative theatre. Choudhuri examines particular theories such as the theory of *Rasa* and Brecht's *Verfremdung* in relation to theatre, or particular theatre forms such as those of traditional Indian theatre and Kabuki, or he examines the structural approach to specific dramatic texts—*Mricchakatika* and *Shakuntalam* in the context of modern aesthetics and Western dramaturgy.

The third group of essays in this collection include papers on some germinal thinkers and writers, such as Jawaharlal Nehru and his role in the development of Indian languages, and Mahatma Gandhi and Romain Rolland on the concept of non-violence..

The concluding essays of this collection are on Tagore, and three of them offer a comparative study of the arts, all occasioned by Tagore's work. Through his discussions on the folk elements in Tagore's songs, on the theatric form and the symbolism of Tagore's dance drama, on the integrated vision offered by poems and paintings of Tagore, Choudhuri touches upon another legitimate sphere of Comparative Literature.

An overriding impression that this collection conveys is that even though Indian literature is marked by diverse pluralities, there is a pan-Indian sensibility easily discernible in it, providing the clue to its inherent Indianness. And perhaps, it is this pan-Indian sensibility which makes the author proclaim that "in India if language is a barrier, literature overcomes it as a value".

Thus we may conclude that Comparative Indian Literature or rather Comparative Indian multiliterary studies, are going to be

genological, thematological, historiographic and concerned with relations both interliterary and alien. But as reiterated in all these texts, a fundamental task of Indian Comparative Literature is the assertion of the importance of tradition and the creation of a literary history constructed upon Indian models. As Susan Bassnett puts it in *Comparative Literature : A Critical Introduction*, implicit to Comparative Literature outside Europe and the United States is the need to start with the home culture and to look outwards, rather than to start with the European model of literary excellence and to look inwards. New programmes in Comparative Literature that have begun to emerge in China, in Taiwan, in Japan and other Asian countries, are based not on any idea of universalism but on the very aspect of literary study that many western comparatists have sought to deny : the specificity of national literatures. Bassnett points out that this new discourse is a long way away from the claims made by North American comparatists for the universal, civilizing potential of "Great" works. And Bassnett states, "Comparative Literature from this perspective is a political activity, part of the process of reconstructing and reasserting cultural and national identity in the post-colonial period". We mention Bassnett's views on "alternative" concepts of Comparative Literature beyond the frontiers of Europe, only to underline the fact that Bassnett's stance too is a long way away from the days when books on Comparative Literature were restricted only to Comparative Western literature. And as far as Indian Comparatists are concerned, their task of working out the rationale, nature and methodology of Comparative Indian Literature in keeping with the reality of the Indian situation remains an ongoing process, as Comparative Literature continues to be redefined all over the world.

In fact, over the past few years, there have been many significant Indian publications in the field of Comparative Literature, other than the ones mentioned in this article. Some of these important titles are R. K. Dhawan's *Comparative Literature* (New Delhi : Bahri Publications, 1987); Abhai Maurya's *Confluence : Historico-Comparative and Other Literary Studies* (New Delhi : Sterling, 1988); Gurbhagat Singh's *Differential Multilogue* (Delhi : Ajanta Publications, 1991); K. Ayyappa Paniker's *Spotlight on Comparative Indian Literature* (Calcutta :

Papyrus, 1992); Harish Trivedi's *Colonial Transactions : English Literature and India* (Calcutta : Papyrus, 1993) ; P. Marudanayagam's *Across Seven Seas : Essays in Comparative Literature* (Delhi : B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1994); and R. K. Dasgupta's *East-West Literary Relations* (Calcutta : Papyrus, 1995).
